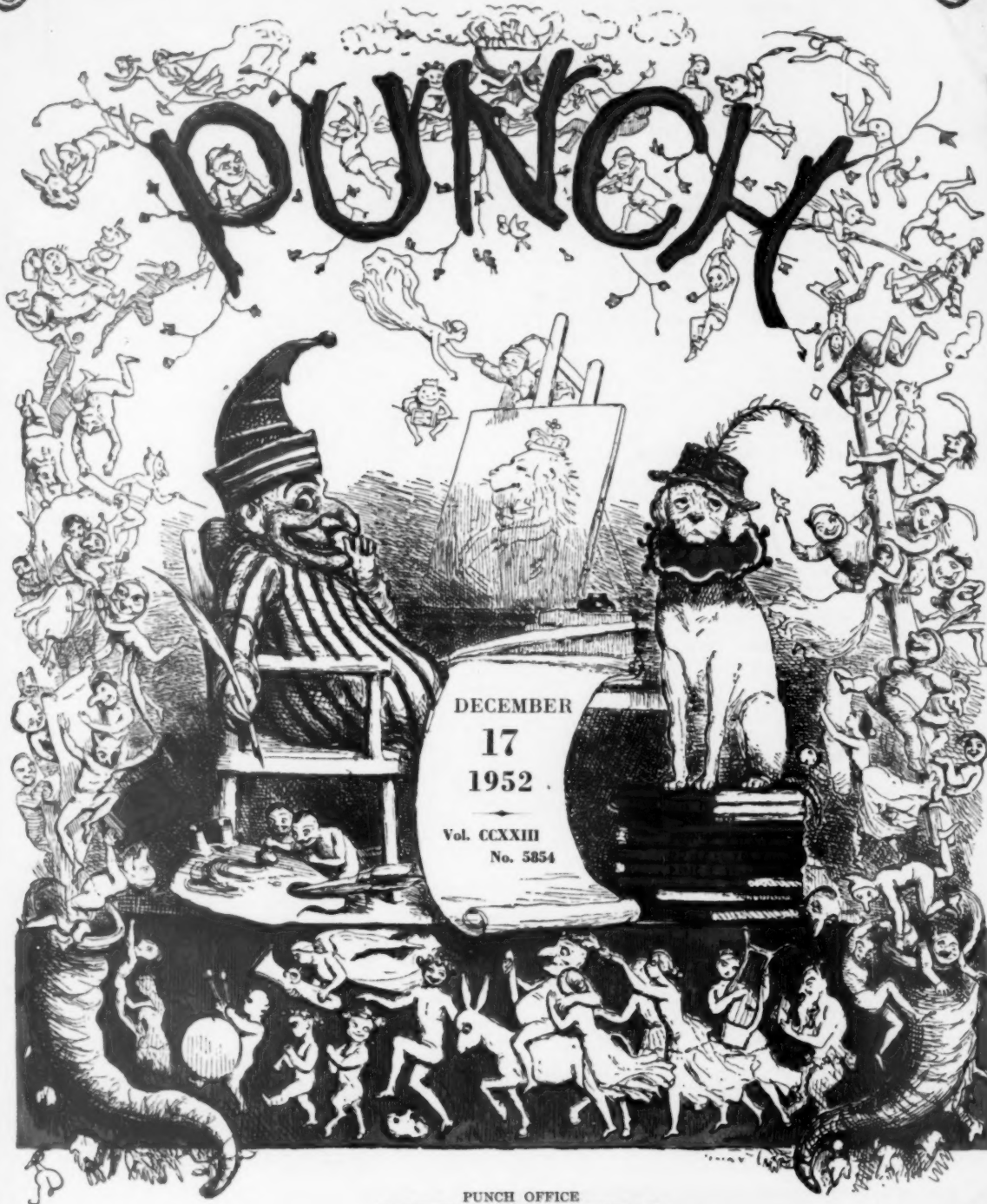


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PUNCH OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI—WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17 1952

6^d

DECEMBER

17

1952

Vol. CCXXIII
No. 5854PUNCH OFFICE
10 BOUVERIE STREET LONDON E.C.4

as sure as day follows night . . .

Wherever you
drive a car or operate
a fleet you'll find . . .

GIRLING

THE BEST BRAKES IN THE WORLD

SERVICE

where specially trained
fully equipped and
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LOCAL Girling Service Agents

keep
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WAY OUT AHEAD

**FACTORY LINED
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Rubber seals, Hoses
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**GENUINE
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and factory trained
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Staybrite Steel

*The World's
Best known Trade Mark
for Steel*

VICAR VICKERS STAINLESS STEELS LTD

Telephone No.: Sheffield 4007



For the present
and always
*Player's
Please*

90's and 100's in decorated Christmas packings

[HCC 8112]

John Player & Sons, Branch of The Imperial Tobacco Co. (of Great Britain & Ireland), Ltd.

You cannot buy a better Vermouth
- so why pay more ?



VOTRIX Vermouth



Ready – when you are

Of the things that a man may reasonably do to secure his own creature comfort, there are few simpler, and none more sensible, than taking a drop of Scotch whisky on the way to bed. You are leaving to-day for tomorrow. Take your leave graciously and pleasurably. Wish yourself well. Choose a whisky soft with great age, soft as a benediction.

For its gentleness and lasting glow White Horse whisky has long been famed. Trust a White Horse to carry you smoothly across the borderland of sleep. It knows the way.

WHITE HORSE Scotch Whisky

Christmas Party



What are they talking about?

No, they're not talking about "Father Christmas." They're talking about Burrough's Gin—because it is triple distilled. This means it undergoes three separate distillations, ensuring the highest quality and absolute purity. It takes a little longer than other methods. But it is effort well spent. For today, Burrough's Beefeater Gin, as always, is soft, smooth and wonderfully clean to the palate. Remember, it's triple distilled. Price 33/9 per bottle; 17/7 per half bottle.



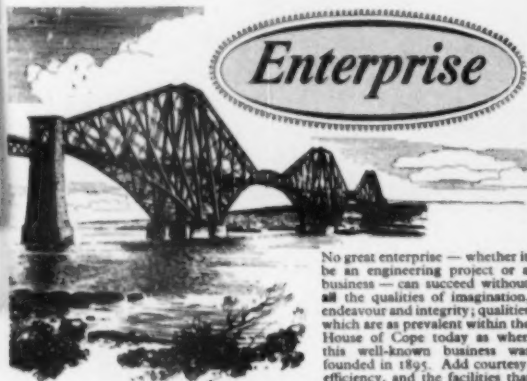
ENJOYED SINCE 1820

BURROUGH'S Gin

BEEFEATER

IT IS TRIPLE DISTILLED!

JAMES BURROUGH LTD., 75 CALS DISTILLERY, HUTTON ROAD, S.M. 11



No great enterprise — whether it be an engineering project or a business — can succeed without all the qualities of imagination, endeavour and integrity; qualities which are as prevalent within the House of Cope today as when this well-known business was founded in 1895. Add courtesy, efficiency, and the facilities that only the world's most modern bookmaking organisation can provide, and you realise why thousands of sportsmen always depend on Cope's.



Send for this Brochure

Send for Cope's illustrated brochure, and you will see at once why Cope's Confidential Credit Racing Service is acknowledged the finest in the world. This coupon will bring you a free copy.

YOU CAN DEPEND ON

COPE'S

The World's Best Known Turf Accountants

Please send me a free copy of your 1952 illustrated brochure. (I am over 21 years of age.)

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

County _____

DAVID COPE, LINCOLN ROAD, LONDON S.E.4



BY ROYAL COMMAND

'Take a shop,' said the Prince, and Mr. Marcovitch, who, a hundred years ago, was making his cigarettes in an obscure room near Piccadilly knew that their excellence had made him famous. Ever since, Marcovitch Cigarettes have been made to the same high standards as won the approval of that Eminent Personage and his friends; they are rolled of the very finest tobacco, for the pleasure of those whose palates appreciate perfection.



Marcovitch

BLACK AND WHITE

cigarettes for Virginia smokers
25 for 5/5

Also **BLACK AND WHITE**
SMOKING MIXTURE
2 oz. tin 9/6

ISSUED BY GODFREY PHILLIPS LTD



Oil AND THE 'CHRISTMAS TREE'

AT THE HEAD of an oilwell there is a piece of equipment to control the natural pressure of the crude oil. This equipment is known to oil men as a "Christmas Tree."

The crude oil from the well has to be treated before mankind can use it. Often it becomes transformed out of all recognition. Paraffin wax, for example, looks quite different from the dark fluid first won from the earth. Anglo-Iranian makes wax for insulating material in radios, for the packaging of foods and, of course, for the cheerful candles on the more familiar kind of Christmas Tree.

THE BP SHIELD IS THE SYMBOL OF THE WORLD-WIDE ORGANISATION OF

Anglo-Iranian Oil Company



LIMITED

A Merry
Christmas
to
everyone
from
Fodens
FODENS LTD
SANDBACH - CHESHIRE



*Memo to hunt ball
secretaries:—*

*All over the world where
good taste and pleasure meet—
you'll find this bottle*

Dry Monopole CHAMPAGNE



Vosges & Beaune & H. J. & Co. Ltd., 10, Bedford Square, London, W.C.1.



"You asked for Benson & Hedges cigarettes, Sir"

Benson & Hedges Ltd. are proud to announce that their Super Virginia cigarettes are available on the world's most famous airways, including all routes served by the following:—

BRITISH EUROPEAN AIRWAYS,
BRITISH OVERSEAS AIRWAYS
CORPORATION,
SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES SYSTEM,
QUANTAS EMPIRE AIRWAYS . AIR
CEYLON . EL-AL ISRAEL AIRLINES,
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AIRWAYS
TRANS-AUSTRALIAN AIRLINES
BRITISH WEST INDIAN AIRWAYS
SABENA . MALAYAN AIRWAYS,
CENTRAL AFRICAN AIRWAYS
AER LINGUS . CYPRUS AIRWAYS

Fitting accompaniment to smoothly luxurious travel,
BENSON and HEDGES Super Virginia cigarettes
are made from the finest of fine tobaccos with
unhurried, untiring care for all those occasions
when only the best will do.

CHRISTMAS NOTE. Your tobacconist will be able to supply
boxes of 50 and 100 Benson & Hedges Super Virginia Cigarettes
in attractive Christmas Presentation wrappers.

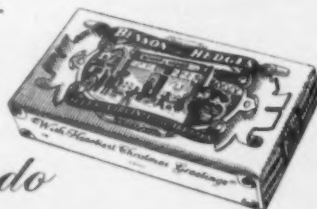


BY APPOINTMENT
TOBACCONISTS TO
THE LATE KING GEORGE VI

BENSON & HEDGES LTD . OLD BOND STREET . LONDON . W.

1952-1953

When only the best will do



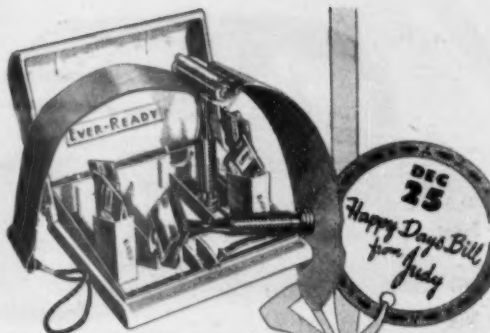
Wherever
we go at
Christmas time



Pop

goes the
MOUSSEC

There is a size for every occasion (bottles 18/6, half-bottles 9/9) and of course there is always a Baby Moussec—the one-glass size—at 2/6 in all bars.



THE PERFECT GIFT and a daily reminder of you

The man who gets this handsome Ever-Ready set will be fortunate and everlastingly grateful too. The fitted case includes the famous Ever-Ready chromium plated razor, stropping machine and strop, and 6 Corru blades, complete 25/-.

COMPLETE
25/-

Give him an

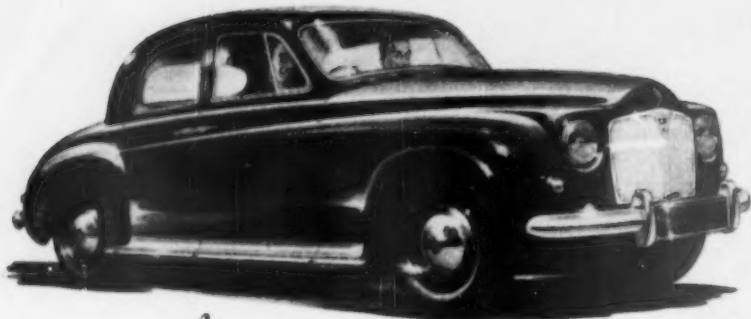
Ever-Ready
RAZOR SET

AVOID
1 O'CLOCK
SHADOW



Look for the ingenious 'Choirboy' pack—just right for the Christmas Tree!

Shaving Bowl 5/6



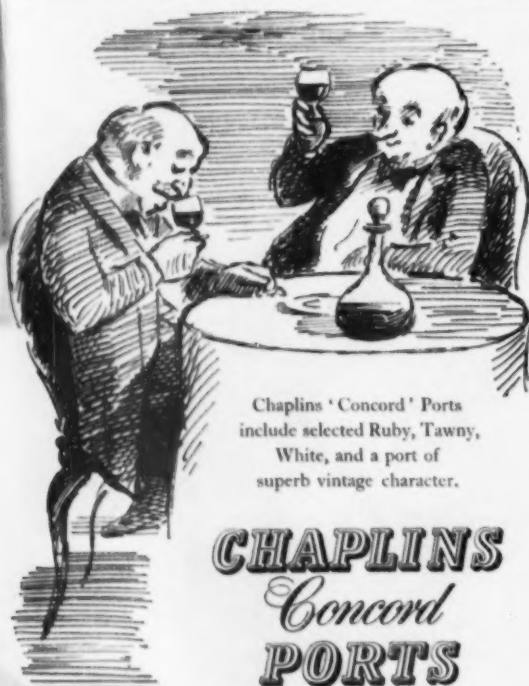
By Appointment
to the late King George VI
Manufacturers of
Land-Rovers
The Rover Co. Ltd.

*I*N THESE DAYS when so many things have to be completed with inadequate materials—or in a hurry—it is extremely satisfying to study the Rover car. Here is tangible evidence of an attention to detail and preoccupation with finish that one might have expected to find in a more leisurely age than ours. Precision in design, craftsmanship in construction and smoothness in performance are the qualities to which the Rover car owes its good reputation.

The ROVER *Seventy Five*

MADE BY THE ROVER COMPANY LIMITED, SOLIHULL, BIRMINGHAM ALSO DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, LONDON

CVS-170



Chaplins 'Concord' Ports
include selected Ruby, Tawny,
White, and a port of
superb vintage character.

CHAPLINS *Concord* PORTS

DIX

W. H. Chaplin & Co Ltd Tower B/E London EC3

91

**GOLOFINA
JAMAICA
CIGARS**

A very fine cigar in a sealed aluminium tube to keep it in perfect condition. What better Christmas gift than this—in any number from one upwards!

3/6 each
Actual length of cigar 4 1/2 inches
17/6 the carton
of five cigars.

GOLOFINA
JAMAICA
CIGARS
UNAPAC
SELECTION
GOLOFINA
JAMAICA
CIGARS
PRESENTED
BLACK & WHITE
UNAPAC
CONTAINS
FIVE CIGARS

162



A DOUBLE DIAMOND
works wonders

IND COOPE'S DOUBLE DIAMOND BREWED AT BURTON



Ski-ing means SWITZERLAND

Come and spend your Winter Holidays in Switzerland, where your days are one long whirl of fun and frolics. Why not join us in this wonderland of glistening snow under a deep blue sky? More than a hundred Swiss Ski Schools are waiting to teach you the white sport in a few happy lessons—at moderate rates. Swiss

Hotel prices are reasonable and stable. Enjoyable holidays are therefore possible within the present Travel Allowance.



For further information please apply to your TRAVEL AGENT or to the Swiss National Tourist Office, 458 Strand, London, W.C.2.



with this snug-fitting

GRIP-EEZI TOP

Paramount short and long socks have the GRIP-EEZI "honeycomb" elastic weave at the top, giving gentle clinging support without pressure on the leg.

The nylon splicing above the shoe-heel protects the point where the shoe rubs, so giving long wear. There is also a nylon splice at the toe. You will like these socks, made of pure wool, in plain and ingrain shades.

- THE LONG SOCK with GRIP-EEZI top
- THE MEDIUM SOCK without elastic
- THE SHORT SOCK with GRIP-EEZI top

THREE
LENGTHS
FOR YOUR
CHOICE



Paramount PRODUCTION **GRIP-EEZI** REGD.
socks for men

from good stockists

Light up and surrender to a quarter of an hour which can wipe out hours of worry and put a new complexion on nuisances to come. A Sobranie Straight Cut is the direct road through a maze of troubles and the straight answer to a pack of queries. It is made to the recipe of one gifted family, it contains the richest Virginia leaf privily selected by the same hereditary genius. And, thank Sobranie goodness, you can repeat it without becoming its slave. You will find yourself smoking less because you smoke so much better . . .

SOBRANIE
STRAIGHT CUT



*four shillings
for twenty*



BY COURTESY OF SCOTT'S RESTAURANT, COVENTRY ST., W.1.

"Allow me to introduce you to my latest discovery..."

"For a moment, Paul, I thought you were referring to me."

"Not this time, darling. The discovery in question happens to be a gin."

"Just another gin, or something rather special?"

"Something rather special. Curtis by name and smoother by nature. Here, have a sip of mine . . . See what I mean?"

"Mmm — I certainly do. You know, I think this might well be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

"I said a sip, my sweet. George, give the lady a Curtis of her own."

George, Head Barman at Scott's Restaurant, smiles. He knows what a difference maturing in cask makes . . . knows that this is what makes Curtis gin smoother. Ask your barman for Curtis, or take a bottle home. It's a matter of taste whether you prefer the Clear or Old Gold, both gins have again been awarded the Gold Seal of the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene. But one thing's certain — if you like gin, you'll like Curtis better.

Smoother — because it's matured in cask

Curtis Gin

"CLEAR" AND "OLD GOLD". AVAILABLE IN BOTTLES, HALF BOTTLES, THREE NIP AND SIX NIP FLASKS.



Brains our common wealth



THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH is more than a vast area of the world's surface. Our common wealth is also the abundance of technical and inventive genius within that area. BRUSH ABOE are largely concerned with the export of the means whereby the earth may become more fruitful. But to think of export in terms of anything except brains is an anachronism.

It is with the object of encouraging the brains within the Commonwealth that BRUSH ABOE have instituted their Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme. This is planned to provide scholarships for engineering graduates from Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Rhodesia, Singapore and South

Africa. Each scholarship is worth about £1,000 and the student receives two years' free training in the factories of the BRUSH ABOE Group. Already arrived in this Country are students from South Africa, India, New Zealand and Pakistan. More are on their way here from various parts of the Commonwealth. And within the Group itself more than 1,000 employees are receiving some form of training. It is by developing the brains within the Commonwealth towards the technical knowledge of what the diesel engine and diesel electric power can contribute to make the earth more fertile that the problem of world food shortages can best be attacked.

EXPORTING POWER THAT THE WORLD MAY BE FREE

THE
BRUSH ABOE
GROUP

Diesel engines and electric equipment for use on land and sea produced by the BRUSH ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING CO. LTD., and ASSOCIATED BRITISH OIL ENGINES: MIRRELESS, BICKERTON AND DAY LTD • PETERS LTD • J. AND H. MCLAREN LTD • THE NATIONAL GAS AND OIL ENGINE CO. LTD • HENRY MEADOWS LTD.

"Where on earth did I put
that ticket?"



That's all right, Sir. Here's
your Maenson.

You must have a good
memory for faces.

And for overcoats too, Sir.
No matter which style, I can
spot a Maenson nine times
out of ten. They've a sort
of thoroughbred look.

What about the cloth?

Tell it with your eyes shut.
It's that luxurious, Sir, it's
almost sinful. And you
don't see workmanship like
Maenson's every day...

Aren't those coats Maenson's
... hanging under the wide
black hats?

Quite correct, Sir. Belong
to two guests... American
Senators... they got them
in the U.S.A. Britain may
be short of ice water, Sir,
but we've still got the best
tailors in the world!

Maenson

...the fitting choice

★ A range of discreetly-tailored Maenson overcoats and suits, in fine cloths, faultless styles and 80 different fittings, awaits your critical appraisal.



'Quality Sells'



By Appointment
Scotch Whisky Distillers
to the late King George VI
Wm. Sanderson & Son, Ltd.

Scotch Whisky is the ideal drink for all occasions

WM. SANDERSON & SON LTD., QUALITY STREET, 15/16 London Office: BATH HOUSE, PICCADILLY, W.1



The famous Italian theatres

begin their grand opera season...

Reductions for tourists on the cost
of railway travel and petrol.

"Travel at will" railway tickets —
Petrol Coupons.

Information from:

ITALIAN STATE TOURIST OFFICE

(E.N.I.T.) 201, Regent Street, London, W.1,
and all Travel Agencies.





BY APPOINTMENT
AGENTS TO H.M. THE KING
STATE EXPRESS
CIGARETTE MANUFACTURERS
TO THE LATE KING GEORGE VI.

STATE EXPRESS 555

The Best Cigarettes in the World

THE HOUSE OF STATE EXPRESS, 210 PICCADILLY, LONDON, W.1.

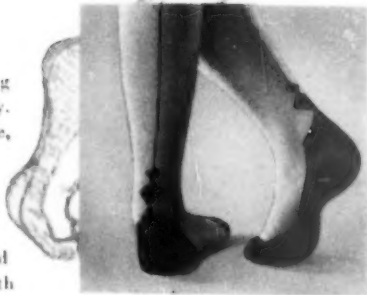
A refreshing change has taken place in the last twelve months — from the gentle craft of *finding* nylons to the subtler art of *choosing* them.

Nylons...

how to suit
your fancy



Choosing nylons is like choosing hats — or any other accessory. There's room for choice and foible, — styles to suit your fancy. For instance . . . Save a pair or two of 30 denier MESH for country-going (very 'correct' with tweeds — pretty, too, and last well). Have fun with PATTERNED nylons — 15 denier mesh, lace-knit, clocks, zebra-striped or frame heels. These can dramatise a dark, formal suit, give the starkly plain dress immense sophistication



. . . helped, of course, by unfussy shoes. Experiment with SHADOW BACKS. Slimming, softly-shadowed legs and dark seams compliment legs and patterned



dresses too . . . it's up to you to team them cleverly.

Try BARE-LEG nylons with your next pair of sandals. Seamless, circular knit (and set to shape), bare-leg nylons make a flattering second skin.

These are only a few ideas to inspire you. Soon we shall all know our own way with nylons . . . meantime, it's gay to explore.

NYLON SHOPGUIDE

'SPECIAL' NYLONS:

Fully fashioned. 15 denier/51, 54, 60 or 66 gauge. 15 denier, mesh or lace-knit. Circular knit. 15 denier, plain or mesh.

'EVERYDAY' NYLONS:

Fully fashioned. 30 denier/45, 48, 51 or 54 gauge. Circular knit. 30 denier.

'COUNTRY' NYLONS:

Fully fashioned. 30 denier mesh or lace-knit.

Circular knit. 30 denier mesh.

Circular knit nylons fit surprisingly well because, unlike other seamless stockings, they can be permanently set to shape. They are made with or without seams.

Keep this reference by you; you'll find it makes Nylon Shopping easier and Nylon Wearing all that it should be.

... more kinds
of nylons to
choose from



British Nylon Spinners Limited,
Preston, Man.



You must have Restful Sleep- to cope with this restless age

CONSIDER the conditions of life today. Think of the rush and bustle, the incessant clamour, the craze for speed . . . When the day ends, some of its tension follows you into the night. It may rob you of the sleep you need so much.

Sleep is "Tired Nature's sweet restorer". You must have it to refresh the weary body, to repair worn nerves, to renew strength and energy. But Nature needs help to overcome the influences that oppose sleep.

It is significant that very many people regularly drink a cup of 'Ovaltine' as a night-cap. Its warm, comforting nourishment helps relaxation of body and mind, has a soothing effect on the nerves and promotes the conditions favourable to sleep.

When sleep comes, 'Ovaltine' continues to assist in Nature's work of restoration. It is made from Nature's best foods which contain important nutritive elements including quickly assimilated natural sugars of malt and milk, *plus* vitamins. 'Ovaltine' is also fortified with additional vitamins B₁ and D.

Drink delicious
OVALTINE
The World's Best Nightcap

Prices in Gt. Britain and N. Ireland: 1/6, 2/6 and 4/6 per tin.

It costs so little—it gives so much.

P. 36/92



BY APPOINTMENT TABLE SALT AND PEPPER
MANUFACTURERS TO THE LATE KING GEORGE VI.



For Farmhouse or Flat

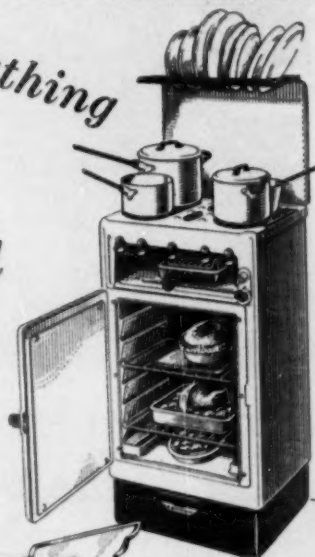
Cerebos

THE SALT OF HOSPITALITY

in every home



Everything
under
control



The cooker every woman wants
Available at your local Gas Showrooms



"Lots of people ask for 'light ale'

but you'd be surprised how many

say Whitbread's. Still, that's a

taste that I've no quarrel with.

Whitbread's make a fine

Pale Ale; they do all their

own bottling and their beers

keep in top condition."

It stands out—

the best of the light ales is a

WHITBREAD



CHARIVARIA

REPORTS that a ten-foot-long cracker forms part of the window display at a West End store are said to have brought many telephone requests to borrow the motto to read over Christmas.

~ ~

Any Clues Yet?

"The Hotels Executive is making an inquiry into the reasons why, since meals in dining cars went up from 6s to 7s 6d, fewer people are dining."

The Manchester Guardian

~ ~

Londoners are saying that during the great fog their tubes were even more congested than usual at this time of the year.

~ ~

"Anyone who attended the Public Works and Municipal Services Congress and Exhibition at Olympia last week must have got a reassuring impression of the solidity of Britain. Municipal lecturers developed such themes as 'Salvage Bonus Schemes' and 'The Cremation Movement in Britain, with special reference to cremator design.' On show were cranes, stone-breakers, refuse collectors, road sprayers . . ."

"Table Talk" in The Observer

Mind talking at another table?

~ ~

A claim by B.O.A.C. that the Comet represents the greatest step forward that passenger transport has taken towards the annihilation of space is said to have

been received coolly by the official packers-in employed on the Underground railways.

~ ~

"When a German girl staying with us one summer ventured out in the road on a hot day in a two-piece bathing suit an elderly farmer coming upon her round a corner wrecked his car in the ditch as he goggled at this amazing sight . . . The gap between town and country still yawns . . ."

News Chronicle

Oh, that gap.

~ ~

A morning paper announces that six hundred sneezers and sniffers are wanted for common cold experiments by the Medical Research Council. Printed appeals are to appear in West End theatre programmes.

~ ~

Fairy Godmothers in Fleet Street Clash

"John Coffey kept smiling . . . at last Fortune has smiled on him. Last week he received a cheque for £75,000 . . . for a treble chance win inspired by the *Sunday Dispatch*. 'I have been a reader since 1929,' he told me yesterday, 'and I always base my forecast on Jack Boulder . . .'"

Sunday Dispatch

"Pools are John Coffey's only hobby. For years he has followed them, investing no more than 5s. a week. His secret? He studied the *News of the World* and used a permutation issued by the pools firm, but previously devised by 'Midax,' our fabulously successful forecaster . . ."

News of the World

~ ~

A commemorative tablet has been affixed to the Lambeth house in which Emma Cons and Lilian Baylis,



BORGAL
C.C.

the founders of the Old Vic, lived. Had they not shared the same address, of course, there would have been a plaque o' both their houses.

"£1,400 THEFTS IN TWO GEM RAIDS
ENTRY BY DRAINPIPE"

News headlines

Thin man strikes again.

The *Daily Telegraph* headline "Earl Marshal sees B.B.C. on Coronation T.V." is said to have caused some public disquiet. Viewers had been looking forward to some quite different arrangement.

A letter to *The Star*, presumed to be complete, reads: "I was interested to read about the imprint of a leaf on a boy struck by lightning. I remember that

my father was struck by lightning and the imprint of a tree was impressed on his back. I am now seventy-two." There's still time.

Advertisements placed in *The Times* by impoverished members of the nobility seeking the loan or hire of Coronation robes are said to have led executives of Trans-Canada Airlines to expect rather more of a knock-down price for their fifteen recently purchased Viscounts.

Or Have You Shopped Early?

"There can be no better gift for anyone than our famous postal course on 'PAINTING IN OILS'—illustrated brochure..."

"—a FOTTED SHRIMPS.—Why not send your friends this Christmas a Gift Card Token? This well-known sea-fresh delicacy is available at 'The Shrimp Shop'..."

"A REALLY ORIGINAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT.—Vouchers for complete Beauty Treatment for your friend's dog. For particulars consult..."—Advertisements in *The Times*

HEADLINE WRITER'S CRAFT

"ICE, FOG SLOWS TRAFFIC," according to this headline in the *Evening News*.

"SLOW TRAFFIC."

"When traffic is slowed it becomes slow traffic. Of course. What else?"

"The verb should be plural."

"I see what you mean. 'ICE, FOG SLOW TRAFFIC.' No. No good. The way that reads it needs a comma."

"Another comma, you mean. Where?"

"Well, after 'Fog.'"

"You read it as a list? I don't see any reason why you should."

"The reason, I think, is that word 'slow.' You don't use 'slow,' other than in headlines, as a verb. You slow things up or you slow them down. You don't just slow them."

"We'll slow them down. 'ICE, FOG SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC.'"

"What about the traffic up?"

"Up what?"

"Up traffic. Why isn't the up traffic slowed like the down?"

"All right then—up. 'ICE, FOG SLOW TRAFFIC UP.'"

"Then you lose the emphasis. This is a headline. You've got to finish on a strong word—'TRAFFIC.'"

"You're being too fussy. What do you want? 'ICE, FOG SLOW DOWN UP TRAFFIC, UP TRAFFIC DOWN'?"

"It still doesn't finish on 'TRAFFIC.' 'ICE, FOG SLOW DOWN'—(or 'UP')—BOTH UP AND DOWN TRAFFIC.' How about that? As a matter of fact, now I come to read on, I find the headline means just

what it says. 'Prolonged snow'—it says in the news item—'was forecast by the Air Ministry to-day for the London area.' Then a new paragraph. 'The snow warning followed a twelve-hour fog black-out of parts of the country which delayed road and train transport.' 'Fog'—you can see is what the headline means—'SLOWS TRAFFIC.' It's a statement. But they're afraid you might miss it. Life is short. Receptiveness to whole sentences is doubtful. They have to capture your attention. So they introduce it by a one-word announcement—'ICE.'"

G. A. C. WITHERIDGE

Re MR. SUKRAGE

(Punch, November 20, p. 668)

WHY does your correspondent forage

So anxiously for rhymes to "courage"

When he could paraphrase with "bravery"

(Slavery, knavery), Or—but me no buts—

Just say "guts"?



ACCOUNTS

I FOUND Simpson in his study, brooding over a large account book, with a lot of scraps of paper, covered with figures, littering the floor.

"This hint of Butler's," he said, "that there may be tax reductions in the next Budget is very unsettling."

For myself, I had found Butler's statement rather cheering. Even though another crisis of some sort was almost certain to come along and make his hopes vain, his words still showed, I thought, a nice spirit.

"Not being on P.A.Y.E.," said Simpson, "I pay my income tax in two huge lumps in January and July, and I am always, as it were, more than a year behindhand. This January, for instance, I shall be paying half the tax due on the money I earned in the year ending last March, if you follow what I mean."

Figures have never been my strong suit, and I gave up trying to do my own income tax years ago, on medical advice. Nowadays I just give my books, such as they are, to a properly certified accountant, and he uses his imagination to fill in the blanks.

"I don't exactly follow what you mean," I told him, "but I'll take your word for it."

"I'm rather particular about the way I keep my books," he went on, "and I like to know exactly how I stand, so each month when I make up my accounts I work out exactly how much tax I shall have to pay on that month's earnings, in the January-after-next and the July-after-next, and in my account book I keep a separate page for these entries, which I deduct, of course, from my general account, thus keeping everything ship-shape. If one doesn't have some such system as this one finds oneself living in a fool's paradise."

"It sounds a shade complicated," I suggested.

"Not to anybody who understands figures," he replied loftily.



"But since the end of last March I have naturally been entering up the sums due on the basis of the tax levels announced in the last Budget. Last month, for instance, I made £103. Knocking off £10 for the personal allowance and two-ninths of £103 for the earned income allowance and various other sums for various other allowances, I found that sooner or later I should have to pay 214 3s. 4d. tax on last month's earnings. I shan't have to hand over the actual cash to Mr. Butler, of course, until January 1954 (£7 1s. 8d.) and July 1954 (£7 1s. 8d.), but I should feel uncomfortable if I had not got it ready in my book."

My head was whirling, but I nodded as if I understood what he was talking about.

"And now," continued Simpson

indignantly, "Butler comes along with these hints of tax reductions in the next Budget, and throws a spanner into the works. The figures in my book will be all wrong, and I shall have to work the whole thing out again. The £7 1s. 8d. that I had reckoned to have to pay in January 1954 may be down to six pounds or so, and the total surplus may be quite large."

I pointed out the bright side.

"You can easily put it right," I said, "by just spending the surplus money."

"Money?" said Simpson. "Who is talking about money? You don't don't suppose that with the cost of living at its present level I can put by actual cash ready for future income tax? It's simply a matter of keeping the books straight."

D. H. BARBER

NIGHT DUTY

THIS is St. John's Road; but the fact has a limited meaning:

It is not something I see, but, as it may be for the blind,
Something I know by induction, a matter of calculation,
Not seized by the senses but grasped by a conscious effort of the mind.

I can see nothing but fog. Fog is much lighter than darkness,
Being somehow self-illuminated and not apparently opaque;
I see the fog through the fog for what seems some great distance
Until an outcrop of the solid world shows me my mistake:

Branches menace from the air when the trunk has no existence;
Almost within touch the pilot-jet of the lamp glows red like a spark;
A torch switched on is a cone of golden and swirling confusion
Raising within arm's length a dense, impenetrable dark.

I can hear nothing but my heels clacking on the ice-bound tarmac.

I can feel nothing but the cold pressing on my ears and throat,

Adding a misplaced, lace-like fringe to the edge of my collar,

Growing coy designs on the creases of my trousers and my coat.

There are no houses or shops or gardens; the edge of the pavement

Is there to head me if I stray from my line in the middle of the street.

There is nothing but the white fog, and the cold gnawing at my fingers,

And a slippery but solid island of tarmac under my feet.

There is no limit to the luminous world through which I am moving,

Or if the limits are there, they are always, as I move, withdrawn

Before me and closed behind me; infinity follows my footsteps:

And time, too, is unending until the lightless dawn.

P. M. HUBBARD

THE MINISTER'S GREETINGS

MINISTRY OF LOCAL AFFAIRS

WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1
To all local authorities in England and Wales

SIR,

1. I am directed by the Minister of Local Affairs to say that he has had under consideration the expediency or otherwise of extending to local authorities some form of greeting appropriate to the current season.

2. In arriving at his decision the Minister has not been unmindful on the one hand of the propriety and desirability of upholding the formality of the relationships which have heretofore existed, and must continue to exist, between the Ministry and the local authorities, and on the other hand of the generally recognized custom at this time of introducing some greater cordiality into the normalcy of business intercourse.

3. The Minister desires me to

emphasize that his decision (conveyed in paragraph 5 below) is to be regarded as being without prejudice to the day-to-day standards of conduct of the local authorities *vis-à-vis* the Minister and his Department. I am also to say that the Minister's action on this occasion is not to be regarded as creating a precedent for the future which would bind either him or his successors in office to any particular course of action, and that he believes that local authorities will readily recognize the desirability of his maintaining complete freedom of thought and action in this important matter.

4. The Minister has furthermore given full and thoughtful study to the question whether any expression of seasonal greeting should inure only to the benefit of the members of authorities or whether it might extend also to embrace some or all of the officers and employees of those bodies.

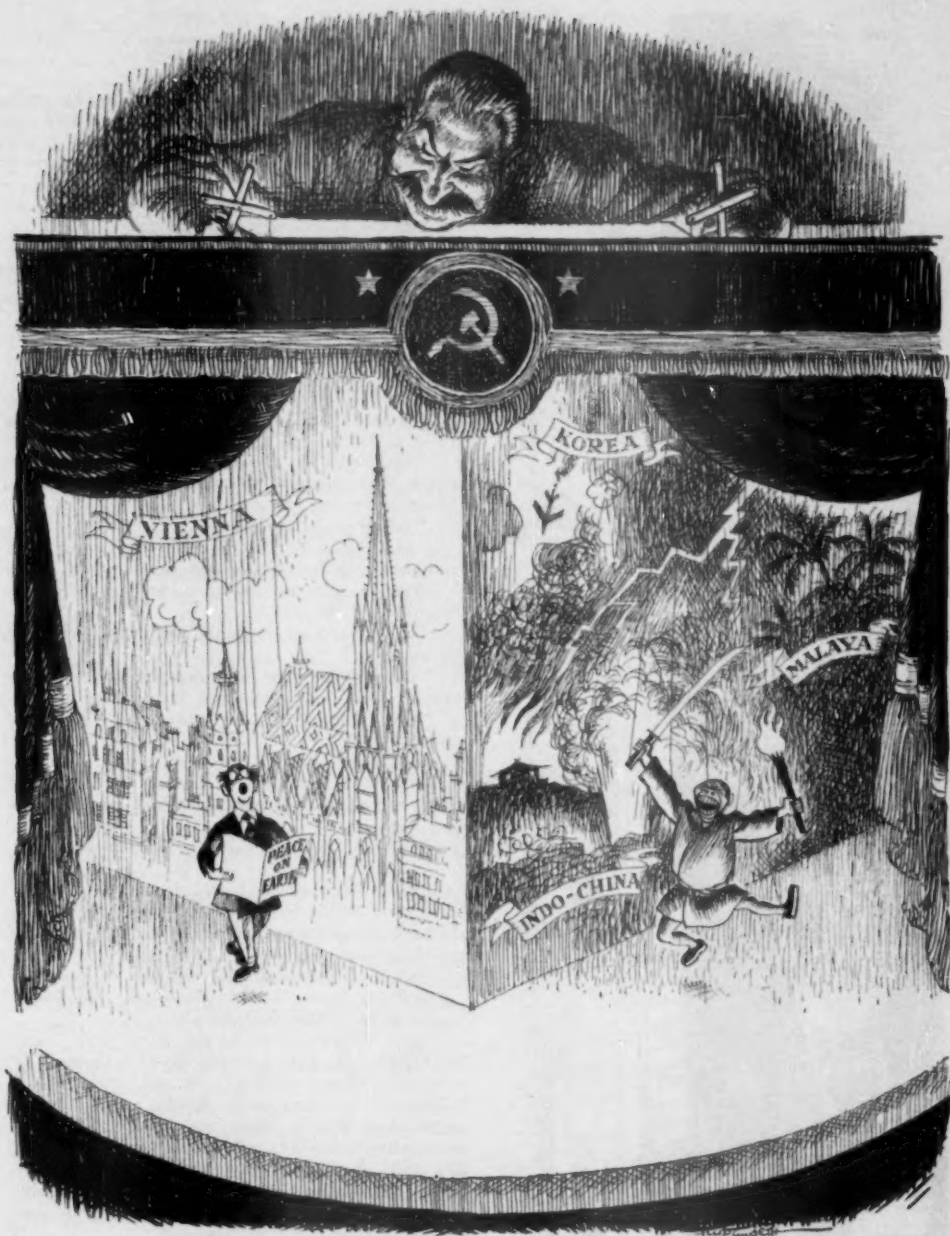
After weighing carefully all the factors involved he has come to the conclusion that it would not be inappropriate to address his message impartially to all who are concerned in the work of local government, as employees of Councils not less than as members.

5. Subject to the foregoing considerations, I am, therefore, to say that the Minister has determined to extend, and hereby extends, to every Lord Mayor, Mayor, Chairman, Alderman, Member, Officer, Workman or other employee (and use of the masculine herein is to be interpreted as including also the feminine) of local authorities in England and Wales, the Compliments of the Season.

6. The Minister is prepared to receive reciprocal expressions of good wishes provided they are received not later than December 25.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant...



LEFT HAND, RIGHT HAND



LOW JINKS

"ER—by the way," said Mr. Chubb casually, prizing a burnt almond from the top of his fruit-cake and pushing it to the side of his plate, "they've been talking at the office about some Christmas party nonsense again this year."

Mrs. Chubb poured herself a second cup of tea and stirred it, looking at him carefully.

"Year after year," said Mr. Chubb with a sigh. He shook his head despairingly. "Heigh-ho," said Mr. Chubb.

Mrs. Chubb sipped her tea and watched him.

"Of course," said Mr. Chubb resignedly, removing another almond and placing it meticulously alongside the first, "the young people expect it, I suppose. What can you do?" He shrugged and took a bite of cake.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Chubb. "What are you going to do?"

"Oh," said Mr. Chubb carelessly, "one or two people will be taking a bottle of something in, I suppose. Sherry and so on. So stupid."

"Which one or two people?"

"Mm?" said Mr. Chubb. "Er—one or two of us, you know. Willis, and—er—one or two others. Then I believe the girls are making chicken sandwiches, or something of the sort."

He gave a short, sardonic laugh and picked up his tea-cup.

"If you don't want those nuts," said Mrs. Chubb evenly, "why don't you throw them in the fire?"

"Oh, I was saving them," said Mr. Chubb. "For afterwards."

Mrs. Chubb regarded him steadily.

"What you really mean," she said, "is that you're going to be late, as usual, on Christmas Eve. Is that it?"

"Er—yes," said Mr. Chubb. "Later, really."

"Later?"

"Yes. Terrible bore, the whole business. Apparently, after Father Christmas has come out of the big stationery cupboard and helped the fairy queen to give out the presents—"

Mr. Chubb paused, for his wife had set down her cup and was leaning back in the settee. He cleared his throat and fiddled with the almonds.

"Miss Fletcher is to be the fairy queen," said Mr. Chubb. He gave a rather forced little snort of derision. "Absurd, isn't it?" he said. "Although I believe she is taking ballet lessons every Tuesday night. And actually, when you think of it, there's no one else who could carry off one of those skirt things that stick out all round, except perhaps Miss Fogarty in the general office. As I told Willis only yesterday, over coffee, if there ever was a person who was wasted in a stuffy office it's little Miss—"

"Bruce," said Mrs. Chubb gently, "will you please pick up those nuts from under your chair and put them in the fire?"

"Yes, dear," said Mr. Chubb.
Mrs. Chubb sat forward again and sank her teeth into an éclair.

"Anyway," said Mr. Chubb, on his hands and knees, "after the presents, young Cheviot is going to play his confounded gramophone, of all things, and I suppose there'll be some kind of a dance."

"What do we mean, precisely," said Mrs. Chubb, "by 'some kind of a dance'?"

"Well," said Mr. Chubb, throwing away the almonds and settling back in his chair, "just an informal little affair, you know. Mr. Grayson himself has promised to bring along some crackers and carnival hats, and, if I know some of those girls, there are bound to be streamers, and squeakers, and goodness only knows what!"

At this point Mr. Chubb caught himself rubbing his hands together, and stopped short, and drank very mournfully from his empty cup.

"I see," said Mrs. Chubb, nodding. "A terrible bore. I sympathize with you."

"Yes," grieved Mr. Chubb. "And as if that weren't enough, the latest thing is we all have to go to a pantomime or something, afterwards."

"A pantomime or what?" said Mrs. Chubb.

"Well," said Mr. Chubb, crossing and uncrossing his legs, "a pantomime, really. In a box, if you please! I—we—they couldn't get seats all together anywhere else."

"I see," said Mrs. Chubb. "And, then, I suppose, you all have to draw lots to see which poor man takes little Miss Gogarty home?"

Mr. Chubb blinked uncertainly.

"Er—no," he said. "There's—er—been no mention of that." He cleared his throat again and brushed crumbs from his waistcoat. "It's Fogarty," he said.

"Well," said Mrs. Chubb briskly, rising and putting the tea-things on the tray, "it all sounds too sad for words, I'm sure. You'll just have to make the best of it, won't you, dear?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Chubb, with a martyred air.

"Although, mind you," said Mrs. Chubb, "I'd give a good deal to see Father Christmas coming out of that stationery cupboard." She went to the door with the tray and paused. "Incidentally," she said, "if that monstrosity you've hidden on top of your wardrobe is supposed to be a beard, you'd better let me trim it for you. And what are you going to do about a robe?"

Mr. Chubb appeared to shrink in his chair.

"Willie's aunt," he said at last, in a very small voice, "has an old red dressing-gown I can borrow."

Mrs. Chubb nodded.

"You'd better remind me," she said, as she went into the hall, "to leave you out some mistletoe. If you have to be miserable, you may as well do it in style."

As the door closed, Mr. Chubb fished an almond out of his turn-up and tossed it, very thoughtfully, into the fire.

ALEX ATKINSON

A CANARY PASSES

YOU passed—and your window
(When morning was red)
Contained a canary
That nodded its head
In abject agreement
Accepting the word
I flung after you
And your celluloid bird!

You passed—and your window
Was veiled by the night
Till floodlit that fowl
In the beam of my light.
I kept on my headlamps
And fortune was kind—
You scraped the thing off
As you pulled down the blind!

MARK BEVAN



"Think of all the poor little boys who haven't got television."

Christmas Trees



THE life-cycle of the Christmas tree, properly so called, is short. The true and genuine Christmas tree is almost invariably found indoors, where it flourishes in pots or tubs, usually shrouded in tinsel or coloured paper. It bears several different kinds of fruit, such as tissue-wrapped parcels, wax candles, silver-paper streamers and coloured electric light bulbs. These products may all appear within a short space of time on a single tree. About a fortnight after the winter solstice the tree suddenly ceases to exist as such. It sheds all its remaining fruit and becomes the *old Christmas tree*, or, among the unsentimental, firewood.

The natural history of this conifer is so prodigious that the ever-inquiring minds of Bouverie Street were seized with a curiosity to know where it came from in the first place. To this end they dispatched a small but well-equipped expedition, consisting of one writer and one artist, into the wilds of Kent. Here the elusive Christmas tree was tracked to its source, or one of its sources.

This source was an afforested area in which an enlightened landowner has practised the art and science of forestry for the past twenty years. It is a short time for a branch of farming that reckons some of its crops by centuries; but already the Lawson cypress, the Douglas fir, the Sitka and the Norway spruce, the European and the Japanese larch and the rest of them flourish, tall and straight, in their plantations. These are separated from each other by green rides and threaded by winding forest tracks; they are edged, often, by beech and sycamore, planted there

for the admirable and wholly scientific reason that they provide a contrast of delightful colour in the spring and autumn. The area is one of small hills; here and there rise up lines or clumps of the old giant trees of the original woodland, massive oaks and monumental beeches, gnarled pine and spiky larch. The place is enchanting, even on a dank, gloomy winter's day with rapidly thawing snow dripping loudly from the branches; it is one of the joys of forestry that the better it is done the nicer it looks. The tallness and straightness of the trees are not a matter of accident; they are achieved by never-ending care, including frequent thinning and the constant pruning of the lower branches by means of the Whitmore chisel, a miracle of simple ingenuity with which one unaided forester can lop off unwanted and knot-making branches to a height of twenty feet from the ground without pausing to draw breath—providing, of course, that he has first learned how.

The economic activity behind the creation of this earthly paradise is the production of timber. There is, however, an odd but remunerative sideline; and that sideline is Christmas trees.

These are, it appears, of two kinds; and it is rather horrifying to learn that one kind is not, strictly speaking, a tree at all. It is the top of a young Douglas fir which has



been cut down in the process of thinning the woods at this season. The main part of the trunk, slender though it is, provides useful timber, and the quite valueless top few feet, by the mysterious laws of supply and demand, become a Christmas tree worth several times as much as the timber of the trunk.

This, though, is a mere Christmas tree-top. The genuine Christmas tree is a baby Norway spruce. Seven thousand of them will, by the time this is read, have taken flight from this one estate and come to earth (or, rather, to tub) in the homes of the land. Their age varies widely. The specimens that adorn the large stores may be seven to ten years old, unless the shop is economizing, in which case they are more probably the tops of Douglas firs. The small home Christmas tree, on the other hand, may be no more than four or five years old.

Even in this short infancy the Christmas tree has had time to see



something of the world. This is only in accordance with the long international tradition of its race. The Christmas tree as an institution came to this country, as everyone knows, from Germany. It may have originated in Germany as a pagan custom connected with the feast of the winter solstice. Some people have held that the custom was adopted by the Germans from the invading Roman legions of Drusus round about two thousand years ago; something uncommonly like a Christmas tree is referred to by Virgil in the Georgics. However this may be, we got it from the Germans, though the tree we use is not German but a Norway spruce; and it does not (or the tree I have in mind does not) come from Norway, but from Scotland.

It passed its first two years north of Tweed, being raised from seed to the status of a very delectable small creature a few inches high

and strangely fluffy in appearance. Then it was packed off across the border and planked down with a lot of its little seedmates in long lines in the nurseries of the Kentish estate. This is a calm and a contemplative place, set on a hillside, from which the infant tree can look down the green rides across a peaceful vista of hop-gardens, orchards and oast-houses. He devotes all his energies to quiet growth, unperturbed by frost, gales, snow, rain, drought or the dirty looks of his more aristocratic neighbours, Oregon, Douglas and the like, who occupy the same open-air crèche.

His main enemy for the next year or two is the rabbit. Wire netting can be adapted to the digging habits of the rabbit by burying it a foot below the ground and turning the lower edge outwards for some little distance. The rabbit always digs where the fence is, never six or nine inches back from it. On the other hand, he can get through the most unbelievably small mesh, particularly in his early years.

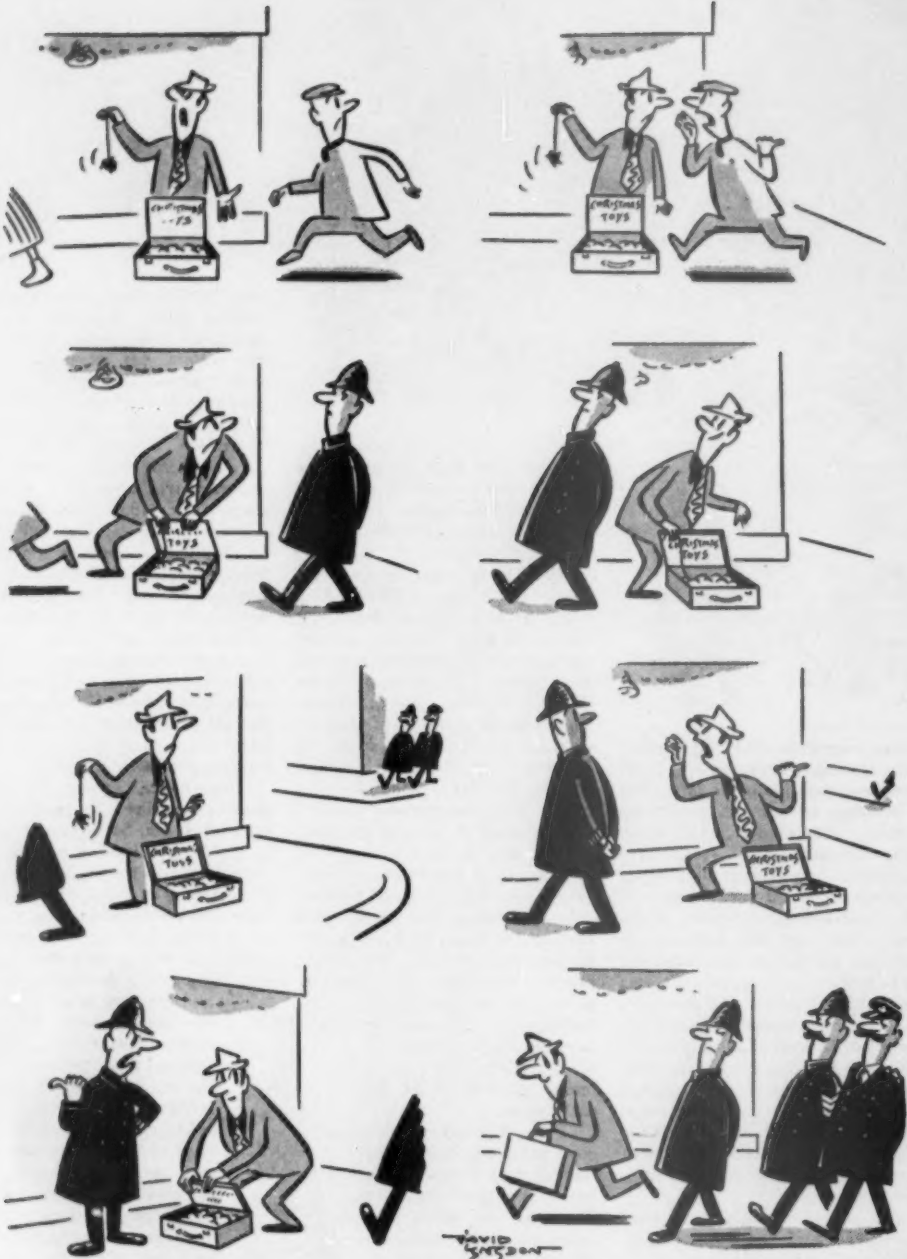
Still, the defences are good, and it may be assumed that the tree we speak of is one of the great majority who survive. Early one December he is suddenly whipped out of his comfortable but increasingly narrow

plot and pushed into a new, roomier hole. The new hole is the place from which, a day or two before, his predecessor has been uplifted. His neighbours here may be all Norway spruces like himself; or he may grow in amongst monstrous Thuyas or Tsugas.

And here he stays until the season arrives when he is in turn uprooted from the ground. His roots are wrapped in sacking, and he is bundled on to a lorry; and after a few uneasy days of jolting journeys, interspersed with frigid periods of waiting, he suddenly finds himself pushed into a pot, or tub, which is almost instantly wrapped round with tinsel. At once he knows himself to be a genuine Christmas tree. The astonishing transformation referred to at the beginning of this article rapidly sets in.

And where, exactly, is this source and origin of Christmas trees? It is well hidden. Sapling woods hem it in where it borders a road; a public footpath goes right through the middle of it, but since the path leads from nowhere to nowhere few use it. The concealment is intentional. At this season men with lorries occasionally descend by night and depart to London, leaving holes where Norway spruce once stood. Four hundred trees vanished from the woods in a night, once, in this way. Then again, in summer, people are addicted to picnicking in pinewoods; and the more inflammable the woods are, the more the people smoke. Such places are, therefore, made hard to find; but they are worth looking for. R. P. LISTER





RATHER A QUEER YARN

THERE was nothing much to it—just a headless figure that walked through the bastion, a dog that glowed like an elm-sagot and a bat-like thing that had a human scream—but somehow it has always lingered in my memory. Draw up your chairs and I'll tell you how it happened.

"My chair is dreadfully heavy. If somebody will push I suppose I can pull, though I can't see for the life of me why we need move the chairs at all. Duncan is perfectly audible at considerable distances, and the central heating is on, so that it is not a matter of getting nearer to the fire."

"I think he likes to feel he is not keeping us from the chimney-corner, as in that quotation. Duncan dear, don't try to organize us so. Just tell us your story crisply and concisely and leave us to listen to it in our own way. You say there is nothing much to it, so we should hardly want to go to the trouble of hauling our chairs about only to have to slew them round for some other raconteur in a few moments."

"He did say that the events lingered in his memory, which suggests they might be of some dramatic power, though, of course, his memory has never been very discriminating. He was always more likely to remember the lineage of a racehorse than the place of a poet in the metrical history of his country. Duncan, I am discussing your memory with Cousin Gladboy. It is well below the highest class, wouldn't you say?"

Not for me to give an opinion, Aunt Petronella. Well, it all began one gusty evening in March. I was battling down Borrowdale against a wind that was strong as a battering-ram and as keen as a serpent's tooth. I was devilish glad when an inn loomed before me. I could not read the sign through the scudding snow, but the glow from the curtained windows heralded good cheer.

"You can't judge by appearances, especially in the catering trade."

"Only too true, Uncle Fridget. In this case the appearances were not even appearances of good cheer. You cannot predict a meal from a glow. You cannot even predict a meal from a menu. Duncan will remember an occasion when we wrote to an hotel at Cannes for a specimen menu and when it arrived it was so attractive that we went out by air only to find that smoked salmon was an extra."

"Niece Petronella, that but illustrates in a somewhat emphatic form the proposition with which I entered the conversation. It was for me to produce a particular instance in support of my general thesis."

"Pray do so, Uncle Fridget. I was unaware of my discourtesy. No doubt the barometric pressure is not all that could be desired."

"Well, then, I was once dining with a certain Countess who must be nameless—something went wrong with a deed poll—and I was much impressed by her major-domo, who had the rubicund visage, the

twirling whiskers and the fruity voice of one born in the vintner's purple. What was my astonishment to learn that he was a teacher of Sanskrit in reduced circumstances!"

"Duncan, your tale seems to be hanging fire. Did you simply loiter outside the hostelry? Keep up your tension, sir."

Sorry, Cousin Gladboy. Within, I found a warm welcome, ample fare and much good ale. I stumbled up to the bedchamber well satisfied with my evening's entertainment and fell into bed with deep content. It was hours later that a tapping at the window-pane disturbed me. For a moment I thought it was caused by the boughs of a noble elm that stood close to the wall.

"Your grandmother, Duncan, had a way of dealing with boughs. She used to pad the ends with lint and cotton-wool so that instead of a smart rap they gave but a gentle thud."

"She was too fond, Cousin Petronella, of cotton-wool. Its cheapness went to her head. I have often thought this might explain the ineditability of her *charlotte russe*."

"Nephew Gladboy, kindly do not cast aspersions upon the *charlotte russe* of one who is not present to defend herself and, furthermore, was noted within a radius of fifteen and a half miles for her charities. Are we to be no longer beguiled with anecdote?"

Well, if you press me . . . One glance at the window was sufficient to show me that I was faced by no mere





"Keep on looking—we might see something."

arboreal visitant. Athwart the upper left-hand mullion was a bloodstained fist that clenched and unclenched in the light of the moon.

"I do not think this fist was mentioned in the exordium. That, I feel, is a point in the exordium's favour. Not all the trumps in the hand were revealed—assuming that this phenomenon is to turn out trumps and not a mere flash in the pan. I, for one, am prepared to grant it a certain romantic quality, although its behaviour suggests merely the exercising of muscles."

"The best method is to squeeze a lawn-tennis ball rhythmically. Had it one in its grasp? To loosen the toes, Great-uncle from Bangor always recommended barefoot soccer."

"Nephew Gladboy, that is not a name we mention in niece Petronella's presence, if you do not mind. The grass grows but slowly over a libel action. Has the narration reached its climax yet?"

No. A strange sound directed my attention towards a press that stood in one corner of the apartment. Before my stricken eyes the door slowly opened and there emerged Something, of a horror so nameless that I fell senseless to the ground.

"Out of bed, presumably. We have not been informed that Duncan had risen. I well remember his

habit of falling out of beds. He fell out of several when he was staying with the Archer-Wentworths, those curious people who collected the abandoned carapaces of crustaceans. Their house had all the discomfort of a museum without any of the gaiety."

"He did not fall only out of beds. He fell sideways through a greenhouse once and was much encumbered with tomatoes. I think that the story has reached an artistic finale. It would be better, dear, to omit the other characters you mentioned, rather than bring yourself round only to be stunned again upon encountering them."

"Cousin Gladboy is correct. We owe you our thanks for entrancing us. Now, if I read the signs aright, Uncle Fridget has some pungent yet helpful criticisms to deliver. *Il faut souffrir, Duncan, pour être vrai raconteur.*"

R. G. G. PRICE

§ §

EPIGRAM

Goodwill

CHRISTMAS, the blessed season of goodwill—
Witness the holly on the trader's till.

J. R.

MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A VACUUM

ON the fifth day of September in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty-nine, I being then in the command of His Majesty's ship *Supersonic*, a frigate of forty rockets and fourth of her name in His Majesty's fleet, and she being then upon the Venus station, my crew did mutiny and put me off in the long boat, with victuals and oxygen for but ten days, to perish or survive as space should suffer me: and little indeed cared they, and would have made my scanty provision still less but for the intercession of the ship's cook, who, being but a simple biochemist, nor even of unmixed blood (but having the green hair and telescopic eyes of the Terro-Martian), had yet more charity than they all. I had done this fellow some service, having given him refuge aboard when the officers of his own planet (his mother was a Martian, of the Canal Zone, his father being, as I suppose, a man of our armies during the late war) would have vaporized him for smuggling ashore a bottle of cow's milk, which is much prized among them, in the oxygen tank of his helmet: and good cause had I now to be glad I had done so. For I went eight days in space; but upon the eighth night, my oxygen being all but spent, and for the rest having, as we say, neither protein nor proton, I heard breakers ahead, and found myself shortly in much atmosphere (though of what kind I could not tell), and soon, my boat being swept on by a strong current of gravity, I knew I was near land.

And now my boat, having no longer fuel with which it might make way in such an air, was at the mercy of the current, and was like to dash itself upon the land, and me with it: so that being resolved to stake all upon the venture, I cast myself into the air, as we say, to fall or fly. The air was, I found, tolerably oxygenated and, with some adjustment of my lung-filter, sweet enough to breathe. I am accounted a good flyer, having from my youth up

been accustomed to such exercise (my father being a ferry pilot on the lunar service); and now I flew strongly and came safely to land, though with little enough about me save the space-skin and helmet in which I stood upright.

The sphere upon which I found myself is small and its climate equable. From such observations as I have been able to make (being without the aid of my astrophysical instruments) I fancy myself upon an uncharted moon of Venus; from the which, there being since the Peace more traffic in these regions, I must count on some chance landfall to deliver me.

5th December, 2259

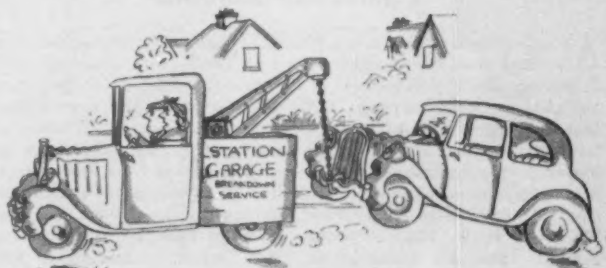
No relief yet, it being now near three months, as I reckon, since I came here. Howbeit, I have been favoured by fortune beyond expectation. The people of this sphere (which I at first supposed uninhabited), being simple, kindly folk, in feature much like the Venusians, though with three eyes less and somewhat longer antennae, but in colour more like the Martians, the skin being green and squamous, have entreated me kindly and done me much honour. They have, in their ignorance, no command of nuclear fission, but make shift to move through the nearer air in great machines by the crude combustion of gases, as did our primitive ancestors; yet having in one of their volcanoes vast wealth

of Peritoneum, for but a little of which, did they but know it, our Planet and Mars fought the late bloody and protracted war. Having but my pocket cyclotron about me, and being myself, in truth, but a poor physioist (of which idleness in my schooldays I now heartily repent), I have yet established factories and done much trade with them, and am in the way, could I but get off this sphere, to amass huge riches and be of great service to His Majesty.

5th January, 2260

It being now four months since I came here, and being yet unrelieved, I am resolved to commit these records to space, in the hope that whoever chance upon them may find means to relieve me. Yet first let them seek out His Majesty's ship *Supersonic* and apprehend her rascally crew, who, if they have come to land, have, I doubt not, given false report of my decease in space: and in particular let them seize and without compunction vaporize at the jet-end the ring-leaders of their mutiny, viz. James Brown, stellar navigator, able spaceman Lee Pong Ho, Karl Sokoff, rocketeer, and Alfred Spudd, master decontaminator; but let them spare Trog, ship's cook, for the kindness rendered to me as aforementioned.

Dated the Fifth day of January, 2260.—Julius Kauntz, Captain, R.N.
P. M. HUBBARD



Eric Burge

"I must say it was a bit of luck running into you like that!"



CHRISTMAS READING

At a time such as this it is very natural that the thoughts of booklovers should tend to dwell on our glorious literary heritage, and that they should wish to devote a few hours snatched from Christmas festivities to renewing their acquaintance with some of the giants of the past. In *The Days that are No More* (Backer & Boyle, 12/6) Professor Trumble turns his attention to the mid-Victorian literary scene, presenting Swinburne, Tennyson, Carlyle and many others in a new, and sometimes a startling, light.

I had always imagined that Tennyson's first meeting with Swinburne took place on the famous occasion, quoted by most authorities, of the Duchess of Saunton's house party, when the younger and slighter poet had the misfortune to lose his footing as the guests were moving in to dinner, and was trampled upon by Tennyson and Mrs. Carlyle. According to Professor Trumble, the first meeting took place a year previously, in the old boat-house just below Potter's Ferry, on the Thames.

"At this time, thanks to some rather premature encouragement from the editor of *Poultry*, Swinburne had snubbed Rossetti's well-meant efforts to secure him a position in the newly-formed Football Association, and had thrown himself boldly into free-lance journalism. Unfortunately, the lively poultry articles which had been so much admired had associated Swinburne's name irrevocably with the hen-run in the minds of publishers and editors, and when the young poet tried to break fresh ground he was repulsed. 'Each editor so far has shown a bewildering bias. They'll take an essay about the Ancona, but not about Blake.' Thus Swinburne wrote in his perplexity to Mrs. Sam Moss, stormy petrel of the Victorian literary world, friend of Tennyson and Carlyle, and herself a writer of some ability. She decided that Tennyson, already Poet Laureate, but perhaps better known at the time as the 'Chipmunk' of the lively nature articles which were then sweeping the country, would be a useful friend for the young poet, and set herself to bring the two men together."

The meeting took place shortly afterwards, and is described by Mrs. Moss in a delightful letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury:

"To create an atmosphere of ease, I introduced both men by their pen-names—Tennyson as 'Chipmunk' and Swinburne, I believe, as 'Rhode Island Red.' Swinburne wore a Glengarry bonnet, with a deep Vandyck lace collar over a velvet smoking costume: Tennyson, the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet which he affected at the time. Swinburne immediately said 'I'm a great admirer of your work.' Tennyson fluffed out his beard, coloured slightly, and said 'Thank you.' Swinburne then confessed that he himself 'scribbled a line or two,' but that he was momentarily feeling his way—'More or less like a blind wave in its long sea-hall,' he added. Tennyson shuffled his feet and bowed awkwardly. After a short silence, Tennyson began, in a deep, resonant voice and with noble fire, to talk of the advantages

to be derived from a course of study in the art of writing. 'I am myself the director of such a course,' he said. 'Many pupils place sufficient work during the first two or three lessons to pay their fees. T. Hardy writes, "Through my letter-box came an envelope, excitingly thin —" At this point Swinburne muttered some excuse about a luncheon appointment, and left the boat-house rather abruptly.'

Professor Trumble has many an interesting tale to tell of this colourful period, and though some are perhaps a trifle well-worn, many are new. We have been told often enough how Dickens set his bloodhound on George Meredith, but what do we know of Carlyle's attempt to ride in the Grand National? I strongly recommend this book.

In *Storm Over Grasmere* (Trimble and Tapp, 10/6) Miss Alethea Quirk succeeds in shedding new light on what has always been something of a mystery—the reason for the gradual alienation of William and Dorothy Wordsworth from Thomas de Quincey.

The year 1818 found De Quincey, thanks to unparalleled indulgence in opium, at a very low ebb. "In this state of imbecility," he writes bluntly, "I had, for amusement, turned my attention to political economy."

Miss Quirk puts before us conclusive proof, in the shape of two letters, hitherto unpublished, from De Quincey to Wordsworth, that this was not the only study in which the Opium-Eater sought distraction. Let us glance for a moment at the first:

"The position now stands thus: On the 18th of this month Professor Wilson intends to gather together a few friends on the occasion of his birthday. The crop of a honey-buzzard is to be opened, and our host hopes to persuade you to make a few pronouncements on the contents. On the 22nd, Southey is to bring you the skeleton of a whooper swan, and, on the 25th, Coleridge and I hope to wait upon you with what I may call the latter half of a goat-sucker or fern-owl, shot by him early last month.

(I say 'goat-sucker or fern-owl' because the bird was so classified by Coleridge—whether correctly, I know not: as to that, we await your opinion. The remainder of the tail may furnish a clue.)

I enclose a shrew preserved in brandy."

"Clearly," writes Miss Quirk, "the distraction provided by political economy had proved insufficient for De Quincey's needs. He threw himself with almost hysterical abandon into the study of natural history, and the estrangement with the Wordsworths was brought about by his constant efforts to infect William—as he seems to have infected Coleridge, Southey and Wilson—with his enthusiasm."

De Quincey's second letter consists of a garbled account of a species of reptile seen behind his bookcase, a vicious attack on the

assertion, which he mistakenly attributes to Wordsworth, that all hard-billed birds have strong, muscular gizzards, and a rather casual apology for hitting Miss Wordsworth with a clod of earth thrown into a thicket in which she lay meditating. "The thing was done," he writes curtly, "to test the truth of the tale that a sedge-bird may be set singing by a missile flung into the bush in which it sits."

It is unlikely that Wordsworth, sombrely stoking his waning fires, would be in any mood to bear all this tamely, but whether or not serious scholars will agree with the conclusions drawn by Miss Quirk from these most interesting letters I cannot pretend to say. The ordinary reader, at any rate, will certainly find a great deal to amuse, and still more to instruct, in *Storm Over Grasmere*.

T. S. WATT



PILOT OF THE POOLS

III

(b) Operational (continued)

IN our last lecture, my lords and gentlemen, we examined some scientific methods of selecting eight football matches for the purpose of winning £75,000 in the Treble Chance Pool. They were the Numbers Method, the Letters Method, the Pin or Carving-fork and the Upside-down Systema. Some of you may regard these techniques as old-fashioned: we therefore turn to:

(v) The Prophets

First-class football teams are no more to be relied upon than first-class racehorses: and no reproach is

intended by that. When this vast affair of betting on football began there were some who feared that the simple players would be "got at," "nobbled," by base betting men or bookmakers. To do everyone justice, there has been nothing like that. Never, so far, has a goal-keeper stayed his eager hand, or a centre-forward his flashing foot, remembering suddenly that powerful interests or beloved relatives desired the match to be a Draw. Nor was such foul work ever likely to be attempted. After all, to win £75,000 you must pick out not one Draw

only but eight, as we have explained: and they must be chosen from fifty-four matches. The business of "nobbling" the right eight goal-keepers or centre-forwards would deter even one of those master-minds of the criminal world. Even if that were done successfully he could never be sure that other members of the teams might not innocently upset his schemes. No, we can see nothing for it but to bribe *en masse* the members of sixteen football teams: and for that, we fear, my lords, few of you will ever be able to find the time.



"Please don't put yourself out about it."

But, without foul play or corruption, there are sufficient uncertainties in any game that is played with a bouncing ball to make a wager on the result of it easily distinguishable in quality from an investment in gilt-edged securities. This is a rough game; the players push, trip and kick each other: at any moment one, or even two, of the best performers of the superior side may be crippled and have to leave the field. Then, it may be, the whole shape of the game is changed: form means nothing, the finest prophecy is futile, the worse side wins. Even if both teams remain uninjured and erect, unforeseen and inexplicable variations in performance may confound the most expert and careful predictions. The conquering hero is suddenly afflicted by lassitude and fumbling: the under-dog, likewise transformed, does unexpected wonders. The Home team (as was noted in a previous lecture) is spurred and inspired by the friendly cries of its supporters: the visiting team, skilful and strong but far from its own folk, is intimidated by the barbarous noises of the natives. But not even "ground advantage" is an infallible aid: the team which has conquered in three successive matches on enemy grounds may go down ingloriously, to an inferior team, before its own astonished friends.

Even if all else be equal, anyone who has ever seen a football match, or even heard an account of one on the air, will recognize how difficult it is to urge the mobile ball into the small space known as the "goal", what incalculable and wicked chances may thwart the finest efforts, or, on the other hand, assist the feeblest.

Yet every daily and weekly newspaper in London (excepting only four, we think) maintains a professional prophet of the Pools—some of them generously keep two or three. These gentlemen, in spite of the many disconcerting circumstances we have referred to, predict, more or less confidently, the results of fifty-four matches *every week*. This must be an immense labour, an exhausting charge upon the sense of responsibility, and—we have to say

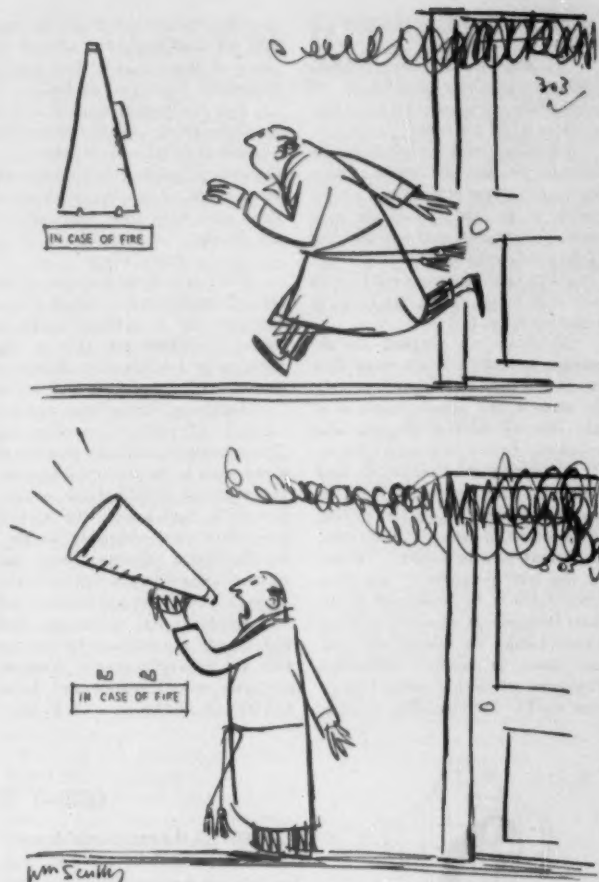
it—a discouraging occupation. We throw no stones at these gentlemen: on the contrary, we respect their tenacity and toil; and we owe almost all our own small successes in this area of life to their researches, information and instruction. But it is our duty in these lectures to reveal the truth. We have for more than a year examined the forecasts of between ten and fifteen prophets, and compared them, on Saturday evenings, with the actual results: and the truth, my lords and gentlemen, the sad but not surprising truth, is as follows:

(1) *On the average the prophets predict no more than 50 per cent of the results correctly.* A few get a little

more than half right (which, we think, is wonderful): but the others, nearly every week, bring the average figure to about 50 per cent, sometimes less.

(2) *On the average the prophets never predict more than 2 Draws—repeat, 2 Draws—correctly.* Some, now and then give 3 or 4: we remember at least one 5. Many prophets get only 1 right, some none at all, and the general average, we repeat, is 2. Now, my lord bishop—admiral—judge—you will remember that to win £75,000 we have to get 8—repeat 8—Draws: so that an average of 2 is not very helpful.

From these stark and staggering facts two—no, three—important



guides to conduct mathematically follow:

(1) *Any investor who faithfully follows any single prophet in all particulars is almost certain to suffer an error of 50 per cent.*

(2) *Since each prophet, on the average, gets half the results right—but no more—the obvious and simple course is to take two of the most successful prophets and act upon half of the predictions of each.*

"YES, BUT WHICH HALF?" you may well reply. That, my lords, is a matter for you.

(3) *Since no prophet, on the average, correctly predicts more than two Draus (where eight are required), the obvious and simple course is to take four of the best prophets and accept two Draus from each of them.*

"YES, BUT WHICH TWO?" we hear you shout. That, my lords and gentlemen, is a matter to be decided by you, on the merits, in each particular case.

It may also be asked: "Which are the best prophets?" As these lectures are to be broadcast in the Third Programme, where advertising is most taboo, we cannot tell you. And there is another difficulty. Whenever we decide, after two or three weeks of outstanding success,

that Prophets A and B are the best, and we start to spread abroad the glory of their names, they have a deplorable lapse and do badly.

But the prophets must not be lightly scorned. We ourselves often boast that we have done better than the average prophet: but this is only because we have studied many of them and, as it were, skimmed off the cream.

(vi) "Form"

There are some earnest operators who make themselves their own prophets by a serious study of "form." These are akin to the horse-race addicts who lie behind bushes with telescopes and follow "trial gallops," know men who are "friends of jockeys," and so on. These know all about the position of every team in its particular League, the state of Paddington's centre-forward's bad knees, the special grounds or teams which are "bogies" to Burbleton Rovers, even the weather conditions which suit the Tigers best. They are to be envied and admired: but again, my lord bishop, you are unlikely to find the time for such refinements. Personally, we would rather not have £75,000 at all.

A. P. H.



GREAT OUTDOORS

"SLOWLY the realization dawned on him that he was lost." A chilling phrase, as who does not remember from his boyhood reading. It's the "slowly" that does it, speaking of a creeping unease building gradually against a background of earlier insouciance. Our hero has sauntered casually off into the jungle-fringe, lightly humming a snatch as he lops off the gaudier blooms with his *machete* or pauses to inspect some monstrous, multi-coloured beetle. His intention was to force his way through the undergrowth for half an hour or so and then stroll back to lunch. It is only when he turns in his tracks to do this, and notices that there are no tracks, that the first doubt assails him. It is momentary, and he laughs it aside. Lost? He? Ha-ha. Presently he will come to the

blasted tree whose bole, as he noted at the time, laughably resembled his favourite aunt. He presses on. Where is the blasted tree? Disappeared. Well, what of that? He may have strayed from the direct route a little, that's nothing: he will get his bearings by the sun. But he looks up to find the sky overcast with a uniform, coppery hue. This time he scouts his mounting apprehensions less easily. Perhaps, after all, it would be prudent to give the rest of his party a hail. They must be within earshot. He calls. They aren't. There is no reply save for the harsh screeching of nameless, invisible birds (seeming to mock him). He turns through three hundred and sixty degrees, staring the jungle in its featureless face. It stares right back. He stands quite still. Slowly the

realization dawns on him that he is lost.

I can vouch personally for the situation's horror.

My Sunday morning walk was planned in the spring, when the lanes were yellow and blue with primroses and those small violet-coloured flowers. I am no naturalist (if it comes to that, no walker either) but Nature calls me very powerfully at that season of the year. It was owing to a series of small, Sunday morning setbacks that the expedition was delayed until the last Sunday of November; and then, because of a parting instruction to call at the little builder's on the way and find out why he hadn't been to paper the staircase, it didn't take me along the lanes at all, but along the damp, Sunday-quiet streets of the town. But for these changes of plan I should never have held converse with Mrs. Greeley, who lives next to the little builder and was collecting leaves off her front lawn in a bucket.

Mrs. Greeley learnt with surprise that I was out for a walk, and with even more that I proposed to return home by the way I had come. Did I not realize that the prettiest footpath in the neighbourhood had its source between her house and the little builder's, and debouched not a stone's throw from my own, offering the walker an unrivalled scenic experience? I thanked her, and she came to the hedge to watch me go.

There had been no mention of a forest, and I was in it, lightly humming a snatch and topping the fiercer nettles with my stick, before I realized it. Even then it did not occur to me to take precautions of any kind. When the path divided, and I took, in my early confidence, the left-hand fork, it brought to my mind, certainly, a fleeting picture of a pioneer notching trees to mark his way. But I notched none. I should have felt a fool. Besides, I had no notcher. Some time later, when I realized that I was using my stick not to top nettles but to make any progress whatever through the thickening undergrowth, I wished earnestly that I had been more practical. Strips of handkerchief

attached at intervals to the trees would have been invaluable now in guiding me back to the fork, where my judgment had clearly been at fault. I had no intention, at this stage, of going back altogether. It would be absurd. Besides, it would be undesirable to come face to face with Mrs. Greeley again so soon.

By now the path had disappeared completely. It seemed very dark. My feet were heavy with mud and glutinous leaves. There was no sound. The familiar Sunday morning music of men hammering and dogs barking, which had been comfortably with me in the expedition's early stages, had now fallen silent. Above me the sky was overcast with a uniform, coppery hue. As I hacked my way between the still, close-planted trees, bonded each to each with sinewy tendrils, the feeling grew upon me that no other man had ever set foot there. The underbrush had an untampered look. There were no mouldering ice-cream cartons in view. Animals ran unseen, but obviously as of right, in their hitherto inviolate territory. From time to time a branch struck off my hat, and at each replacing its inner band was colder and damper to my brow.

Slowly the realization dawned on me that I was lost.

I have always hoped that I should never have to call for help, have always thought that, drowning in a canal, I should be compelled for my pride's sake to go down at least two and a half times before giving voice. Even so, to shout "Help!" from the dark waters of a canal is something one could, in *extremis*, bring oneself to do. To shout it when you are standing safe and unmolested among a few trees not more than a quarter of a mile from the gasworks, town hall, police station and all the other sweet amenities of civic life is something quite different.

I cleared my throat and called. "Coo-ee," I think it was.

There was no reply, save for the harsh screeching of nameless, invisible birds, sudden and near at hand. Then, to my horrified surprise, a face appeared over a bush, a white face with staring eyes, and

a pattern of criss-cross all over it, as if it had been tortured with a waffle-iron.

"Forgotten something?" said Mrs. Greeley, pressing her face more closely against the chicken-wire. "What do you think of my turkeys?"

Luckily I was able to explain that I had. Indeed, I was lucky all round. To have got home an hour late for lunch and having forgotten to call on the little builder would have meant terrible trouble.

J. B. BOOTHROYD

PROTEUS

OLD Proteus rose each day at noon.

Emerging from the deep
He'd waddle to the shore and soon
Drop off again to sleep.

When questioned he would artfully
Endeavour to escape
By changing into every
Imaginable shape.

Within the modern State such men
Exist in countless swarms,
Finding a refuge, now as then,
In multitudes of forms.

E. V. MILNER



BALLADE OF AN INCORRIGIBLE PUTTER-OFF

"PROCRASTINATION is the thief" (they say)

"Of Time." Well, that may be as it may be,

Yet certain precedents defend Delay.

Drake played his game, *then* made the Spaniards flee;

Canute refused to budge until the sea Had proved his point and made him very wet.

I take these instances to heart—e.g.

I haven't done my Christmas shopping yet.

Shop windows flaunt their seasonal display,

But I remain a laggard absentee

While others arm themselves for Christmas Day

With purchases—from Ludo to TV,
From Wilhelmina Stitch to Anouilh,

Cigars to pilches, glamorous twin-set

To gadget for an aunt's rheumatic knee—
I haven't done my Christmas shopping yet.

Crisp greetings-cards are bashed from tray to tray

As milling shoppers crane their necks to see

Stage-coach, migrating mallard, Santa's sleigh,

King's College Chapel, skating chimpanzee.

The queues for posting parcels at the G.

P.O. resemble rush-hour on the Met.

I stand aloof—my arms are package-free:

I haven't done my Christmas shopping yet.

Envoi

Prince! It's impossible for you or me
To answer all these letters that you get.

I mean to leave this office sharp at 3.0:

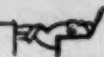
I haven't done my Christmas shopping yet.



Anton



IMPRESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT



Monday, December 8

If Parliament went in for Pantomime (and there is a school of thought which holds that it *does*) to-day's proceedings might have borne the heart-searing title: "The Motion That Nobody Loved." And they had a climax appropriate to that title, too.

What happened was this: Last Thursday a motion of censure on the Government in general—and Mr. HARRY CROOKSHANK, as Leader of the House, and Mr. PAT BUCHAN-HEPBURN, Chief Whip, in particular—was defeated in the division-lobbies. But on Tuesday (as already recorded in these Impressions) there had been a bad-tempered all-night sitting and, on Wednesday afternoon, a scene in which the Prime Minister was booed and called a "goose." Sir CHARLES MACANDREW, Chairman of Ways and Means, was in the Chair on both occasions, and the Labour Party later tabled a motion expressing lack of confidence in his competence and impartiality because (a) he had, during the night, accepted a drastic closure motion from the Government Chief Whip and (b) he had failed to allow Mr. MORRISON to raise a point of order during the "goose" incident, whereas he *had* allowed the Prime Minister to do so.

The surprise caused by this action was greatly increased to-day when Mr. CHUTER EDE, a convinced admirer of Parliament, allowed himself to be *conscripted* (as Lord SIMON always insists the word should be) for the task of moving the motion. He succeeded in doing so, in the main, with calm and dignity. He also made it plain that he did not at all relish the business. He blamed the Government for the affair, or (alternatively, as the lawyers say) the Standing Orders of the House, or anything or anybody else but the Chairman of Ways and Means. Had it not been for the Government, the C. of W. and M.

would never have been faced with the need to consider accepting an "antiquated step" allowed by the Standing Orders but out of accord with modern ideas.

Coming to the "goose episode," he laid it down that it was "very difficult to stand by one's memory," and proceeded to give his own recollection of the Prime Minister's "indicating that the Chairman should sit down" by an imperious wave of the hand, whereupon the Chairman had done so. This, he thought, earned the censure of the House . . . well, let's say that censure ought to fall on the P.M. or somebody. And life in the House



Impressions of Parliamentarians

Mr. Manuel (Central Ayrshire)

had become intolerable, with "ancient and archaic weapons" being wielded by the Government all over the place. He begged to move . . .

Then occurred one of those incidents which make the House so surprising a place. Liberal Mr. CLEMENT DAVIES, so often relied on by the Labour Party to act as Inspector of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Opposition Motions, stepped smartly forward and gave this little brat of a motion the most resounding cuff, which knocked it flying. The ideal said Mr. D., sternly, to try to censure the Chairman because of the misdeeds of the Government! The nerve! charging him with partiality and incompetence, when he had merely exercised, honestly, a discretion reposed in him by the House.

The majority in the House was always entitled, Mr. D. went on, to insist on its will—otherwise it was not democracy but the reverse. So long, of course, as the minority was allowed reasonable scope to express its views. And Mr. D. brought the House down with the comment: "One never likes the side that makes charges against the referee!"

Anyway, he said firmly, there should in all things be tolerance by the majority, optimism by the minority. And tempers should not too easily be frayed, as they were just now. It was a brilliant little skirmish which left the Brat looking more forlorn than ever.

Mr. CHARLES WILLIAMS, as the only ex-Chairman of Ways and Means in captivity, gave the House a glimpse of the difficulties of debate as seen from the Chair—and added his clout to the general battering of the Not-so-Innocent Chee-ild. When he added an eloquent plea for respect for Parliament, itself greater than any Parliamentarian, the Motion's fate was sealed.

It was double-sealed when Mr. REG PAGET, from the Labour benches, upped and announced that the Motion expressed the "exact opposite" of his personal views. He suggested a Penalty Box, to be occupied (presumably in enforced silence) by those who raised spurious points of order. It was in vain that Mr. GEOFFREY BING, armed with piles of reference books and wads of papers with which he juggled ceaselessly as he spoke, argued and cited and spoke gravely of "improper pressure on the Chair."

Mr. CROOKSHANK just flatly denied all the charges, and Mr. JOHN WHEATLEY, opposite, repeated them all over again—only to announce that he did not like the Motion, either. Nobody was the least bit surprised when Mr. EDE rose and obtained leave to withdraw his proposal. It seemed the fitting climax to this sort of barnstorming "drammer" that the Chee-ild should

be Abandoned on the Parliamentary Doorstep.

One would not have been surprised to see the entire House rise and stride, preceded by bands, around the Chamber, crying with lusty fervour: "We—like—Mac!" For, it was quite plain from every speech, they certainly do.

The remainder of the day's talk was on education.

Tuesday, December 9

How loud is a Parliamentary reply? This question, which came up for consideration for the first time in the Commons to-day, aroused a lot of excitement and may, for all one knows, figure one of these days in that austere volume "Erakine May's Parliamentary Practice."

It was Mr. CHURCHILL who brought the matter up. He replied to a question about Irish partition, and the questioner said he had not heard. So Mr. Speaker asked the P.M. to read the reply again. He did so—in a tiny, weeny voice

almost inaudible, even through the very efficient amplifying system. (It was a thing he had done before, when he considered the House less than attentive, apparently as a means of compelling silence.)

But this time there were protests. Mr. Speaker, clearly non-plussed, confessed that he knew of "no precedent" for the delivery of a reply in such small tones. Most of the Opposition shouted for a repeat performance, this time with more "volume." Mr. C. said nothing, but there was a gleam in his eye. Then somebody asked a supplementary question, and the gleam became brighter.

Stepping to the Table, leaning close to the microphone, and speaking with a deliberation and enunciation the B.B.C. Pronunciation Unit would have applauded to the echo, he bellowed: "I MUST HAVE NOTICE OF THAT QUESTION!"

The effect was all that he could have desired. Startled legislators recoiled from the concealed but quivering loud-speakers as from a carelessly-dropped atom-bomb.

There was a roar of rather surprised laughter, and then silence. What will "Erakine May" make of all that?

In the Other Place the Air Minister announced that United Kingdom 'planes would take part in the London to New Zealand air race in October, 1953. But another Government spokesman had to turn down a proposal that red tunics should be restored to the Army, if only for ceremonial occasions. It was pleaded that the "thin red line" should be given back to us—but the Minister said, in effect, that this was impossible because the cost would be a bit thick. It seems that red cloth costs about three times as much as blue cloth, an odd item which surprised many of their Lordships.

Wednesday, December 10

The House of Commons got on with the Committee stage of the Transport Bill, under the threatening shadow of the guillotine. It was not a very cheery proceeding, but at least there were no more "scenes."

House of Commons:
Soft Words Make
News

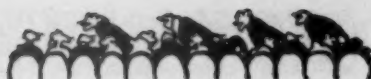
House of Commons:
Transport Bill



Thelwell



AT THE PLAY



Sweet Peril (St. James's)—*My Friend the Enemy* (BOLTONS)

ANYTHING new that can happen in a play about a creaking marriage is welcome, and *Sweet Peril* has a certain novelty. Miss MARY ORR and Mr. REGINALD DENHAM prepare the ground carefully, as if for one of the standard matrimonial tangles, and then surprise us with something more constructive. Helped by a good set of a shabby Cornish cottage, in which Mr. LAURENCE IRVING has been cunning over detail, they persuade us that the *Jevonses* are in shoal water and are sufficiently likeable to excite regret if their marriage piles up. Having done all this quite easily, the authors fail in one vital respect. *Robina* is supposed to be a writer of pot-boiling novels, *Clive* is alleged to have written an intellectual *tour de force* and, but for the bottle and chronic nostalgia, to be on the verge of producing another. Unfortunately no evidence whatever of these capacities can be detected in their conversation; *Clive* is just a spoilt young man, making the worst of a

hard-up present and living tiresomely in a wealthy past, while *Robina* is just a sound little housewife tired of propping up a home as well as an alcoholic husband. The mistake was to suggest that these otherwise convincing people could have put two thoughts on paper.

They are pleasantly played by Miss DULCIE GRAY and Mr. MICHAEL DENISON, but the real interest lies in a couple who arrive from America. An old flame of *Clive's* cables that she and her husband are on their way over, and she sounds so awful that *Robina* prepares for trouble. But Mr. and Mrs. Ames prove to be as charming as they are clever and tactful. *Clive's* automatic gallantries are heartily rebuffed; *Robina's* novel is bought for publication, and with a wisdom and decency for which one scarcely looks in this sort of comedy the visitors turn what might have been a dully conventional situation into quite a sparkling discussion of sex and marriage. It is enough to say that by means to which our grandmothers would never have confessed they

Friend the Enemy in writing without bitterness about friction between Jews and Gentiles, and that is half the battle. It must be admitted that her play is very rough, but in the spontaneous friendship between the two sons of her warring suburban families it finds a point from which



[*My Friend the Enemy*
Michael Harper—
MR. GORDON WHITING



[*Sweet Peril*
Clive Jevons—MR. MICHAEL DENISON
Robina Jevons—MISS DULCIE GRAY
Marianne Ames—MISS MARGOT STEVENSON

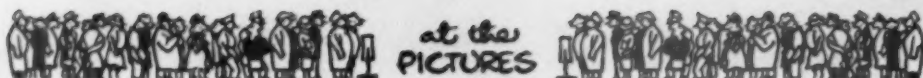
MISS SHEILA HODGSON
has succeeded in *My*

larger implications seem to spring. In all the dreary futility of racial recrimination these two engaging young men get drunk together and forget their feud in mutual concord, discovering common ground and, in it, a way for the future. As drama *My Friend the Enemy* is shaky, but as a pamphlet it has sense; it presents the Jews in a slightly better light than the Gentiles, but essentially it is fair. Mr. FRANK MARCUS and Mr. GORDON WHITING convey this fairness with sincerity, and Miss MIRIAM KARLIN and Mr. HAROLD KASKET, as the Jewish parents, and Mr. DAVID WOODMAN, as an oily political gangster, make quite effective characters.

Recommended

Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea* (Duchess), and Morgan's *The River Line* (Strand) are London's best. *The Mousetrap* (Ambassadors) is a neat Christie crime play.

ERIC KEOWN



The Narrow Margin—Folly to be Wise

A FILM which has no big names either in the cast or in the technical departments, *The Narrow Margin* (Director: RICHARD FLEISCHER), almost the whole action of which is limited to a train journey between Chicago and Los Angeles, turns out to be infinitely more absorbing and satisfying than many an "epic" the success of which the producers have tried to assure by spending millions of dollars on stars and sets. The outline of the story is simple enough: a detective is in charge of a vital witness on the train, and has to guard her throughout the journey from the ruthless gangsters who are determined that she shall never come out of it alive. Except for an introductory sequence in Chicago when he and a colleague collect the woman, and his colleague is killed, there is practically no departure from the train at all until the final scene of the arrival—though on analysis quite a number of the incidents prove to have taken place in enclosed rooms or at restaurant tables or in corridors that are essentially just the railway equivalents of such things anywhere else, where similar incidents have been occurring in films for twenty years. But here the constant imaginative decoration with fresh, lively, authentic detail never lets us lose the feeling of the train journey;

the whole thing is admirably handled, and the tension is terrific. As usual in this sort of story the parts do not call for much more than competent acting: these characters are obvious, uncomplicated, without depth, existing only for their positions in the narrative; but easy competence itself is always a pleasure to watch, and there are occasional opportunities here for something beyond it. The witness herself, who appears to be the sullen scared widow of a killed gangster, has a small angry scene of her own that is outstandingly well played by MARIE WINDSOR. There are more convolutions in the plot (impossible to describe without revealing what the synopsis calls the "dramatic commencement of the surprise climax") that are not always easy to follow; but in an action-and-suspense picture, if it's well done, details of the plot can very often be ignored as they will almost certainly be at once forgotten. The action and suspense are the important things, and when they are presented, as here, with assured accomplishment and in insistently interesting terms, they make a thoroughly satisfactory thriller.

Direction and acting make *Folly to be Wise* (Director: FRANK LAUNDER), a version of the late JAMES BRIDIE's war-time play "It

Depends What You Mean," an almost continuous treat. It is not a great work of film art, but it is excellent entertainment and highly amusing. ALASTAIR SIM plays his original part as the chaplain and entertainments officer at an Army camp who



(*Folly to be Wise*)
The Reverend W. Paris—
ALASTAIR SIM

organizes a local "brains trust" and finds it unexpectedly troublesome to run. He dominates the picture, but all the members of his team are beautifully characterized, from the more obvious and conventional types like Lady Dodds (MARTITA HUNT) and Dr. McAdam (MILES MALLESON) to figures that films have hardly touched before, such as the truculent artist (ROLAND CULVER) and the young but mannered professor (COLIN GORDON). I don't claim great things for this film; there are some easy laughs and a certain amount of corn. But it might have succeeded commercially with no more than a flat reproduction of the effects it made on the stage. Imaginative direction gives it far more than that—and I don't mean the extra scenes, either.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

There is another first-rate, enjoyable new suspense-story in London: *The Steel Trap*. *Miracolo a Milano* (10/12/52) continues, and also *Kon-Tiki* with *Les Inconnus dans la Maison* (22/10/52). *Golden Marie* or *Casque d'Or* (24/9/52) is in its last weeks.

Most interesting release is *The Thief* (26/11/52), which is ingeniously made without dialogue but would be good in any language.

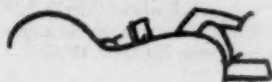
RICHARD MALLITT



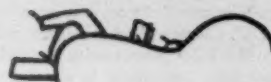
Gus Forbes—DON HEDDOE

Mrs. Neil—MARIE WINDSOR
Walter Brown—CHARLES MCGRAW

(*The Narrow Margin*)



BOOKING OFFICE



Chekhov

Chekhov. David Magarshack. *Faber*, 30/-

MR. DAVID MAGARSHACK is right when he claims that Chekhov has been vastly misunderstood, but he only adds to the confusion by beginning his biography with the statement that "Anton Chekhov is perhaps one of the most baffling figures in Russian literature," and by going out of his way to insist that there was some strange mystery in Chekhov's personality. I should have thought the case was exactly the reverse. For a man of burning genius who led in many respects a perfectly hellish life Chekhov was surely uncommonly sane, shrewd and straightforward. Who else of the writers of his set and period would have gone to a Siberian convict island to sort out its horrors for himself with a card-index? Even the baleful influence of Tolstoy's puritan philosophy, an awesome factor in Russian outlook at that time, only clogged his ironic edge for a few years. No doubt to the solemn reformers with whom the intellectual circles of Moscow and Petersburg were over-stocked it was very shocking that anyone of Chekhov's capacity should be bored by high-flown conversation and most contented when fishing and picking mushrooms; but it seems to me that the man who said "Proximity to nature and idleness are the indispensable elements of happiness" left very little of mystery. Chekhov's enormously attractive character is complex, but not baffling. It is only surprising that in one very frail body should have been combined infinite sensibility and humour, the practical instincts of a born social worker, and a boy's delight in simplicity.

Mr. Magarshack's *Chekhov* tries too diligently to explain what in such a context is easily accepted. It worries over cause and effect, as in the theory that love for a married woman drove Chekhov to Sakhalin, and grows ponderous in such phrases as "It is impossible to dissociate human conduct from its purely moral consequences." The fun inherent in the whole tragic-comedy of Chekhov's life still deserves lighter treatment, but these shortcomings must not make us ungrateful for a solid biography that draws on a new complete edition of the letters just published in Moscow, and is much the most comprehensive we have yet had.

Into forty-four harried years Chekhov packed ten men's experience. A sanctimonious and incompetent father had made his childhood miserable with floggings and choir-practice; by the time he was twenty his whole family was round his neck, where it remained, supported by the short stories he churned out while taking his medical degrees. In one magazine alone he published eighty-seven stories in the year he became a doctor. For the rest of his life he continued to be chronically short of money, and the larger sums he earned towards the end were soon eaten up by extensive journeys made in an attempt to stave off the tuberculosis that ground

him down during his last twenty years. He had his moments of gloom, misinterpreted by those who liked to think him as defeatist as themselves, but courage and hope were unshaken. His painstaking work as a doctor, most of it in the country and free of charge, sharpened his extraordinary insight into the human mind; and while he was pouring out stories and planning cholera relief he somehow found time for a tireless programme of village improvement, that included the building of three schools. It is to be hoped that Mr. Magarshack has finally exploded the cherished portrait of a despondent dreamer.

Nothing was crueller than that the success of the four great plays should have come when Chekhov was almost too ill to care, even about Stanislavsky's misunderstanding of them. His brief marriage with Olga Knipper, the happiest thing in his life, probably meant more to him. And nothing would have given him keener pleasure than the adventures of his coffin, which was dispatched from Germany in a wagon marked "Fresh Oysters," and met in Moscow by a military band intended for a dead general. ERIC KEOWN

A Bag of Stones. John Hampson. *Veracoyte*, 12/6

Regional novels, even the best of them such as *A Bag of Stones*, have an almost unreal, rarefied atmosphere in comparison with the upheavals of to-day. Mr. John Hampson's region gives few clues to its identity, but life at the Lodge in the depths of the country has the familiar characteristics. There is the humble mother "working her fingers to the bone" for an over-sensitive son who hates his big, cruel father



"We three kings from Orient are . . ."

just returned "from the war" (he is reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence's gamekeeper, without the lust); there is the local school with a kind but puzzled school-mistress; and there is some servants' hall chit-chat about Lady Sedleigh. There are no prize vegetable marrows or funny rustics, but there is a strong drama (some would say owing to the young man's tenacious mother-fixation) and a good deal of symbolism concerning the stones he collects and hides as weapons against his father. One could scarcely have imagined the David-and-Goliath story interpreted in terms of the family, but Mr. Hampson makes it acceptable.

R. K.

The Crowded Hours. Anthony Richardson. Parrish, 15/6

To say that the life-story of Lionel ("Sos") Cohen might better have been written by himself is less a criticism of Mr. Richardson than of his task. It is not easy to reconstruct convincingly, with what must be mainly imagined detail and dialogue (a mistake to have too much of either, perhaps), experiences which can only have been learnt by hearsay, and from a single source. Nevertheless, the larger facts are exciting and enthrallingly presented. "Sos", a fugitive to the Marines from a counting-house desk at sixteen, an operational flyer in World War II at sixty-nine (by mysterious official dispensation), crammed the fiercely restless years between with a strange variety of experience, including three other wars, a hair's-breadth deliverance from a Portuguese firing-squad, and an unarmed victory over an African lion achieved by

telling it sternly to "Get to hell out of this!" It did. The reader will turn back repeatedly to the frontispiece, to look again at the man who did these things.

J. B. B.

The Anathemata. David Jones. Faber, 25/-

This long, strange poem is stiff going; but Mr. Jones has established his right to an attentive hearing, as Joyce had when he published "Finnegan's Wake." His elaborate preface and footnotes explain the innumerable references, classical, Celtic, theological, antiquarian, that most readers would otherwise miss. At its first appearance "The Waste Land" was bitterly criticized for the notes that now we no longer need, and in time, perhaps, *The Anathemata* will be immediately and not merely ultimately readable. It links passages in the Mass with the stages in which Celtic and Mediterranean strains combined in British civilization. Mr. Jones' sub-title, "Fragments of an Attempted Writing," admits that the theme has not been pursued to a completion. Many of its unexpected juxtapositions are exciting and some of its London-Welsh invocations of the Thames in the accents of the Towry have a wild beauty. On the whole, however, it lacks visible coherence in plan and music in detail. R. G. G. F.

SHORTER NOTES

East of Eden. John Steinbeck. Heinemann, 15/-.

Variations on the Cain-Abel theme set in a developing Californian valley between the Civil War and 1918. Stuffed with local history, philosophical discussion, sex, love, cruelty, kindness and highly cadenced prose. Despite its obvious compromises with the requirements of best-selling, it has enormous vitality and inventiveness. Like an American Hugo, Mr. Steinbeck shows some of the careless vulgarity that goes with power. The villainess, by the way, is the most concentratedly evil charmer since Dumas' Milady. To be enjoyed as melodrama and not underestimated as literature.

The Man Whistler. Hesketh Pearson. Methuen, 18/-.

An entertaining lightweight, mainly anecdotal. Mr. Pearson occasionally makes an offhand reference to the psychological pressures behind Whistler's painting; but on the whole he seems content to gossip and let the art of biography go hang.

Pleasures of Music. Jacques Barzun. Michael Joseph, 21/-.

The perfect leisure-hour companion, this well-dressed volume is an inspired collection of writings under the common stimulus of music and musicians. Highlights are the scintillating prose of Chesterton, Warlock and van Dieren, Bernard Shaw's caustic "Hell is full of musical amateurs" comments, and Prokofiev's tragic testament written to his fellow Soviet composers after his music had been "found" to have subversive Western tendencies.

Venice: The Lion and the Peacock. Laurence Scarfe. Robert Hale, 25/-.

Drawings and descriptions of the city and a short, discursive account of Venetian art considered mainly, but not entirely, as a reflection of Venetian life. Once the reader has begun to overlook the rather prosy jocularities of the style, the author's good sense and freshness make an increasingly favourable impression.

Christmas Eve. Alistair Cooke. Hart-Davis, 7/6.

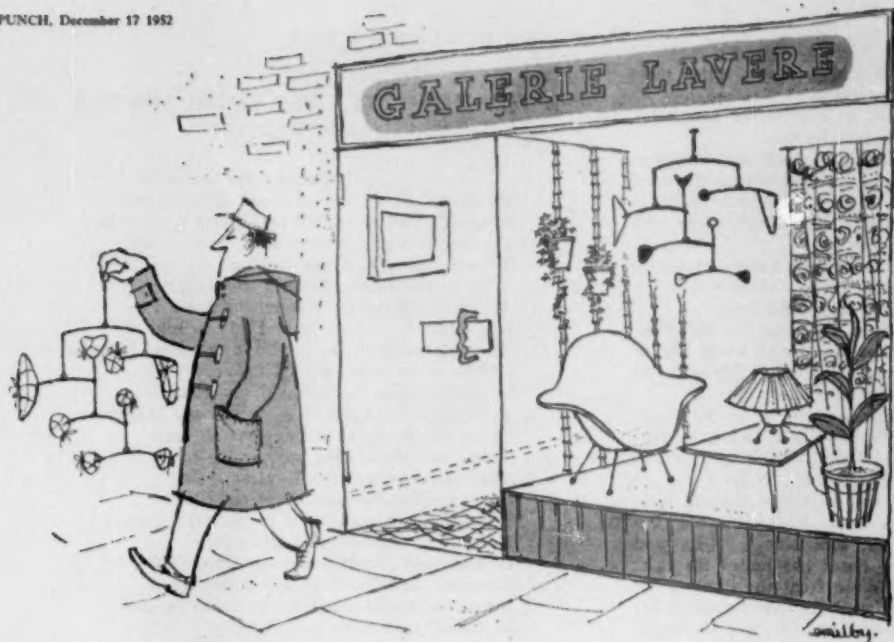
Three "Letters from America" broadcast on three successive Christmas Eves; the one about the graduate Santa Claus, the one about the Hollywood man returning to Connecticut by Christmas Eve midnight, and the one about the three Van Dam daughters. Slim, large-print volume with many illustrations by Marc Simont. An obvious present.

An Experience of Criticism. Christopher Fry and Others; edited by Kaye Webb. Perpetua, 7/6.

Dramatic critics and their victims brought together in a highly entertaining experiment, the latter championed by Mr. Fry and, more briefly, Mr. Alec Guinness, the former by eight leading exponents, all with something different to say about their craft. Commended to all theatre-lovers, with or without grease-paint. Portraits and other characteristic decorations by Ronald Searis.



"Strictly speaking, sir, we shouldn't be showing this model—it's still on the secret list."



CAROLS FOR FORTY

I SHALL take you myself for singing this afternoon, children, as Miss Twigg is at home with a sore throat.

Can I go and open the piano?

Can I give out the carol books?

Can we sing the new carol Miss Twigg is learning us?

She's learning Miss Green's too, and we're trying to win 'em.

Remind me, all of you, to take yet another lesson on "Learning-Winning" and "Teaching-Beating" to-morrow morning. And I don't want Bedlam either here or in the hall. I am looking for two conscientious and light-footed children who can lead this class at a rational pace from here to the hall door. John Todd, we'll see if you can take a little responsibility to-day. And Anna.

Miss Twigg always lets someone go first and open the piano.

Very well then. Pat, run ahead. Lead on, the rest of you. Don't gallop, John Todd! I might have guessed! Nor crawl, maddening boy! Just step it out briskly.

Straight in, children, and stand in your usual places. For pity's sake, Pat, stop crashing the piano lid. You children seem to think that baby grands come down in every other shower.

Are we going to have carols?

Breathing exercises first, dear. All breathe in! Hold it! Out! MUCH TOO MUCH noise on the "Out!"

Miss Twigg says that's old-fashioned. She lets us do paper bags. We blow and blow at pretend bags, and then we do them, with a bang.

Very well. Blow! And again! Bigger still! Now pop! ONE POP, children, is more than sufficient. Miss Twigg's nerves must be in better shape than mine, I can see. All on the floor, sit. There is no need, Michael Jones, to roll about all over everyone else. Some of you boys make mayhem with a single movement.

Can we have our carols now?

Miss Twigg always lets us boys give out the books.

All hush! What is this squeaking that is going on?

It's our crêpe soles, miss. Side-ways on, miss, to the floor, miss.

Then sit still. I shall give the books out from here. Pass them along to the end, child. Brian Bates, don't hold us all up by peering inside each book.

I left a bit of silver paper in mine last week.

We seem to be six books short. Some of you must share. And that doesn't mean a wrenching match, John Todd. You will be left with the nether half of that book if that's the way you handle it. We'll start with "Good King Wenceslas" if it's in C. All listen quietly.

Miss Twigg don't play it like that. She always uses two hands.

That will do. Off you go, and anyone scooping "Fu-co-el," like a siren, stands by me. Stop a minute. Is someone singing bass?

It's Eric, miss. He always honks like that.

Well, Eric dear, it isn't that you aren't TRYING, but your voice is

rather strong, so sing rather more softly, will you?

Do let's have our new carol, miss. Number ten.

One of those mid-European ones, I see; and unfortunately in five flats. I think it might be better to practise that a little longer with Miss Twigg.

Miss, there's someone hollering outside.

It's Miss Judd, miss.

Open the door for her then. Perhaps Miss Judd would like to hear us sing a carol? There is just time for one more.

Please can it be our new one?

Would you like to hear it, Miss Judd? I think it would sound better unaccompanied. When I can see faces and not backs of heads, John Todd, and Michael Jones has stopped that silly giggling, and Brian Bates has pulled his carol book down from the front of his jersey, and Richard Robinson has quite finished looking at his tongue—I will give you the note.

That was lovely. While you were singing, Miss Judd gave me some good news for you. Miss Twigg is much better and will take your next singing lesson. Isn't that wonderful? For all of us.

D. J. SAINT

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Comfits, and genial streame of orient Herbe;
Unceasing hee awhile, yet fortified
With inward provender; and to his Sire
Proferr'd with earnest yet reluctant hand
The fatal Scroll. An awful Silence held
This pendent world, and through its utmost Bound
Stilnes unutterable, unquiet Calme.
Which when his Sire receav'd, expectant Hee,
Hov'ring twixt doubtfull *Hope* and sad *Despaire*,
Bifore his cloudy Orbs the chrystall Lens
Affix'd testudinal. His anxious Eie
The various script perus'd, alert to find
Sweet comfortable words, yet onlie found
Discomfort, and in letter'd Art, and Tongues,
Nor lesse in Science, civil Historie,
Or knowledg of this round terrestrial Globe,
Recorded shame. As when a sullen cloud
O'respredd the smiling Heavns, the azure vault
Is darknd, and anon the solar ray
Untimely quencht, so on his darknd browe
Sits angry Gloome, and on his careful face
Disastrous Ire. He spake, yet all in vaine:
Him, for her latest Sonne by pittie mov'd,
List'ning afarre, with suddaine gesture *Eve*
Condemns to silence, and compassionate
Prevents what *Nemesia* and *Justice* dire
Had els for Doome assign'd . . . G. H. VALLINS



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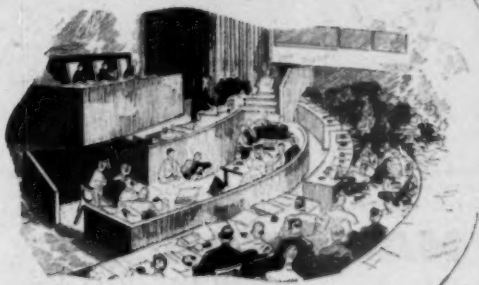
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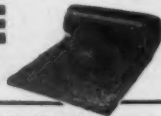
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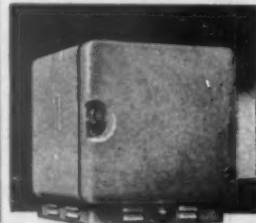


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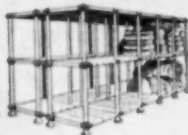
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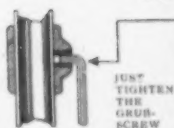
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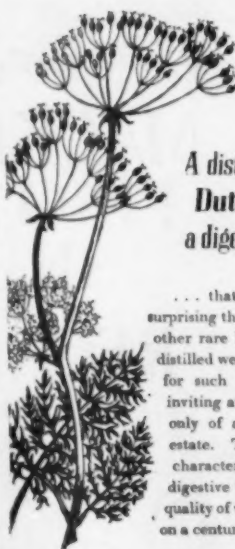
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